

News Column

by Greg McClure, KSU-Riley County Extension Agriculture Agent
110 Courthouse Plaza
Manhattan, KS 66502

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Phone: 785/537-6350
Fax: 785/537-6353

WHEAT VARIETIES

Like many of you, we don't plant nearly as much wheat on the McClure farm as we did 10 or 20 years ago. Again, like most of you, our decision to plant less wheat is primarily driven by economics. When an enterprise isn't profitable, we look for something to replace it.

Unlike some in Riley County, and counties to the east of us, we still try to keep wheat in our rotation. Keep in mind the location of the McClure land. Most is in Phillips County. Soybeans are just starting to take hold in that part of the state, and corn is starting to take over grain sorghum acres. Wheat is still a major crop there.

While wheat is still a major crop in Phillips County, we didn't get a single acre planted in 2018, to be harvested in 2019. Our intent was to plant soybean acres to wheat, but it was wet last fall, delaying soybean harvest, then delaying wheat planting to the point that we decided not to plant.

We will plant some wheat this fall, mostly because we believe a good rotation is the best way to keep weed populations in check. One of the fields we will plant to wheat had been in corn for several years and has a shattercane problem. We'll leave that field in wheat at least two years, and maybe more.

The other field going to wheat is just being rotated out of corn and beans so it will grow better corn or soybeans the next year. We think it will pay off long-term.

As we plant wheat less often, it make it a little more difficult to keep up with varieties.

The good news though is that there are several good varieties that will work in Riley County.

If you just looked at this year's Riley County Extension wheat plot results, you would choose Larry, WB 4418, LCS Chrome, and SY Monument. Those varieties are probably OK – and a couple of them are really good – but we really should look at more than one year and maybe more than one site when choosing varieties.

The four varieties that Romulo Lolatto, K-State Extension wheat specialist, puts at the top of his list for north central Kansas are WB-Grainfield, SY Monument, Bob Dole, and Zenda. If you think Riley County is in northeast Kansas instead of north central Kansas, then Lolatto's recommendations are Bob Dole, WB-4269, Zenda, and SY Monument.

I like Grainfield, and it has performed well in Riley County for several years. It has excellent yield potential, good straw strength, and good drought tolerance. It tillers well, making it a good option following soybeans.

Grainfield is a good variety that has been around long enough to become more susceptible to foliar diseases. Therefore, it has become more responsive to foliar fungicides,...meaning you may want to spray it with a fungicide to achieve top yields.

Despite its tendency to have lighter test weights – at least in our county plot – Monument is another variety that needs to be planted in this area. Monument also does well following soybeans, and since much of the wheat planted in Riley County goes in after soybeans are harvested, it is a variety we should be planting.

Straw strength is a concern for Monument, so it shouldn't be planted on the high-fertility bottom ground. But, we don't plant much wheat on that good bottom ground anyway. Monument has excellent yield potential and deserves consideration.

Bob Dole is a variety that I like, but I'd like to see how it performs this coming year to

decide if it makes its way onto my “elite” list. Lolatto likes it, and it was a solid performer in our county plot, so you should plant enough for seed in case it continues to get better.

Zenda is the final variety on Lolatto’s list. Zenda was touted as the replacement for Everest when it was introduced a few years ago. It has good scab resistance, and is the variety to plant following corn. However, it needs to be planted on time instead of late because it relies on fall tillers for yield. If planting behind beans, I’d go with Monument or Grainfield instead.

If you choose from this group – Grainfield, Monument, Bob Dole, and Zenda – and maybe plant some LCS Chrome or Larry, you should be in good shape.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclure@ksu.edu.

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