



Keeping Up-to-Date on Agronomic Issues

December 2008

The 2008 Manitoba Agronomist conference was held on December 9th & 10th at the University of Manitoba. The conference was well attended and focused on four main themes: cost of production and financial risks facing today's producers, crop management, soil fertility and pest management. Shaan Tsai and Earl Barga, both Agronomists with CANTERRA SEEDS, were in attendance.

Two presentations with agronomic significance are highlighted below.

- 1) **"Phosphate Fertilizer Management"** presented by a panel consisting of Don Flaten and Geza Racz (Dept. of Soil Science, U of M), Bill Toews (Canadian Wheat Board and Farmer), Rigas Karamanos (Viterra) and John Lee (Agvise).

The panelists focused around the management of phosphate due to the dramatic increase in the cost of this input. All the presentations concluded that if soil tests indicate sufficient phosphate levels, phosphate fertilizer application could be decreased or eliminated for a year or two. This should be done on a field-by-field basis as per the soil test and not as a general practice on an entire farm. Cutting phosphate application is understood to be a short-term solution; within a few years depending on soil test levels, the phosphate fertilizer program would need to be implemented again. Side-banding fertilizer placement techniques were also discussed, showing the advantages of properly placed phosphate to the emerging seedling. To conclude the panel discussion, the consensus seemed to be that if a producer had to prioritize which crops were to get phosphate, the order would be as follows: canola, cereals, and no application to flax.

- 2) **"Solving the fusarium head blight puzzle"**, with panelists Scott Henry (Bayer), Randy Clear (Canadian Grain Commission) and Mike Grenier (Canadian Wheat Board).

The focus here was not "solving" the Fusarium Head Blight (FHB) problem. The focus was how to diminish the effects of FHB. There were three main management tips presented. The first was to select varieties that have the highest rating for FHB resistance. (The Provincial Seed Guide is a great reference for variety resistance ratings.) The second was to use an appropriate crop rotation to decrease the incidence and severity of the disease. Third, was to apply fungicides recommended for suppression of FHB during the suggested stage of crop development. With the use of these three management tools producers can help to minimize the effects of this disease.

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