

Researchers Still Working On Perennial Wheat

It's been a few years since FARM SHOW first told you about efforts in Quebec and Oregon to develop varieties of perennial wheat (Vol. 19, No. 2 & 4) but researchers are still hopeful of success.

The researchers we interviewed there were Jean-Pierre Dubuc, at Canada's Soils and Crops Research Centre in Sainte-Foy, near Quebec City, and Tim Peters, a private plant breeder and owner of a small seed company in Myrtle Creek, Ore.

Dubuc retired about four years ago and passed the project on to Andre Comeau, who reports that the work has been shelved for a couple of years now, due to budget cuts.

Comeau was encouraged by the recent success of Surya Acharya, a colleague in Alberta who developed a perennial rye. He's attempting to find a funding source to put

perennial wheat back into active research.

Dubuc's approach was to cross a wheat species with quackgrass. Yields of the resulting perennial lines were only about 1/3 that of annual varieties yet growers might net the same per acre, with most of the savings coming in annual seeding and soil preparation costs.

Peters, too, has been limited in funds for his research. "I've sold some seed of the first variety I developed," he says, but "I shifted the focus to a new variety, 3625, which has more winter hardiness and tends to revert back to a non-heading state better than the first variety."

Both Jefferson and 3625 are the result of crossing annual wheat with some perennial wild wheat relatives.

"In the first couple of years, yields are good

enough to give growers a net return maybe half that from an annual wheat, but then it begins to thin out dramatically. Generally, the clumps get larger and the number of heads per clump increases, but the number of clumps declines and yields drop off," Peters says.

Although yields drop off, Peters says ground cover remains fairly consistent, so even an older stand of perennial wheat provides good soil erosion control.

Based on selections he's made recently, Peters figures he's about 12 years away from a successful perennial wheat. Comeau, on the other hand, can't say when or even if the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada project might bear fruit, since no funding source currently exists for the project. He'd like to discuss the issue with wheat growers'

organizations and soil conservation groups, among others.

Peters says he could make a small quantity of both Jefferson and 3625 seed available, on a research only basis. "We can sell 1-oz. packets, if people are willing to do their own increases," he says.

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Gopher "Eliminator" Puts Poison Into Tunnels

After Willie Elsing, Rushmore, Minnesota, retired from farming, he began restoring part of his farm to native prairie grasses.

"I have developed one of the best wildlife areas in my area," he says. "But along with the prairie plants and wildlife came hordes of pocket gophers."

Elsing looked around for a way to control them. "The only thing that really works is poison but I couldn't find an efficient way of applying it that would not pose a threat to

other animals," he says.

Elsing devised what he calls the 'Rodent Ridder.' It worked so well he applied for a patent on it.

"I can now place the poison directly into the burrows, deep in the soil where only the gophers are affected by it," he says. "I haven't been able to completely rid my prairie of gophers. That's probably not possible. But I have been able to keep the population in check."

Elsing, an active 90-year-old, says the Rodent Ridder is easy to use. "It's similar to a soil probe. In fact, you can also take soil samples with it," he adds. Elsing says his tool can also be used to fertilize trees and even to plant walnuts and other nut-type trees.

"I had several of these made for me, and have sold about 400 of them over the past two or three years," he says. Included with the Rodent Ridder are instructions on how to identify pocket gopher tunnels and burrows

and exactly where to place the rodenticide using the tool.

Elsing's Rodent Ridder sells for \$46, including shipping and handling. Minnesota residents need to add \$2.60 to cover sales tax.

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"Backward" Trucks Tow Behind Forage Harvester

When John Baum heads out to the field pulling a truck behind his pull-type forage harvester, he's not surprised when people stop on the road to stare. He knows that few people have seen a setup quite like his.

The Appleton, Wis., farmer pulls a 3-ton Ford C8000 truck - equipped with a backward-mounted self-unloading, 20-ft. long Miller wagon box - behind his New Holland 900 forage harvester, towing off the back of the truck. When the box gets full, he unhooks the homemade hitch from the back of the truck and drives back home. There, he hooks a tractor up to the wagon's pto shaft and unloads the forage into a silo blower.

The truck's front wheels are used for steering. There are two cables that run from a rear hitch to the truck's tie rods.

"It eliminates the need for another tractor driver and lets me travel at highway speeds on the road," says Baum. "In the field it pulls just like a wagon. When the box is full I can get off the tractor and drive the truck back home, which allows me to work by myself. Another advantage is that a truck is less likely to get stuck than a tractor and wagon, because the weight of the load is over the truck's rear wheels, which are always driving. And driving on the highway is safer with a truck than pulling a wagon.

"I've got two of these self-unloading trucks. I bought them used but I bought the

wagon boxes new. I paid \$1,000 to \$2,000 apiece for the trucks, which were about 15 years old and had a lot of miles on them but still ran good. The trucks were actually cheaper than what I would have paid for new wagon running gears."

Baum used round steel tubing to make the hitch and uses the same hitch for both trucks. When he's working alone he leaves the hitch on the ground wherever he unhooks it from the forage harvester. The back end of the hitch fits inside a slot in a big steel plate that he welded to the back of the truck. The hitch has a bolt that goes crosswise through two steel plates that drop down onto either side of the plate that's welded onto the truck. A 1/2-in. dia. safety pin goes across the top so the bolt can't bounce out, and there's a safety chain to keep the truck from turning too short.

The truck steers via a pivot point on back of the truck - a vertical steel pin that's welded to a 23-in. length of angle iron. A pair of cables that hook onto the angle iron run up to the truck's tie rods. The cables go over a pulley and criss cross, with one cable going to the left and one to the right. As a result, the truck follows right behind the forage harvester at all times.

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John Baum mounted a self-unloading, 20-ft. long Miller wagon box facing backward on his 3-ton Ford truck. He tows the truck behind his New Holland forage harvester.



When box gets full, he unhooks a homemade hitch from back of truck and drives home.

Truck steers via a pivot point on back of truck - a vertical steel pin that's welded to a 23-in. length of angle iron. A pair of cables that hook onto the angle iron run up to truck's tie rods.



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