

Oregon Seed eUpdate

A Newsletter from the Oregon Seed Council

FEBRUARY 2017

Feds Deregulate GE Bentgrass

Despite the agronomic and economic risks of genetically engineered grass to the Oregon grass seed industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture on January 17 deregulated Scotts Miracle-Gro's controversial Roundup Ready Creeping Bentgrass.

In the ruling, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service determined the genetically modified bentgrass is "not likely to pose a plant pest risk."

The department does not consider potential market impacts when deciding whether to deregulate genetically engineered crops, according to Michael J. Firko, a deputy administrator for APHIS, only whether the crops pose a plant pest risk.

The department cited in its determination that it made its decision based on analyses of field and laboratory data submitted by Scotts/Monsanto, adding: "In their petition for non-regulated status, Scotts/Monsanto states they 'have no intention to and will not commercialize or further propagate such plants in the future and will not grant a license to or otherwise allow other entities to obtain, use or propagate such plants.'"

Among seven findings APHIS highlights in its final report, it stated, "Glyphosate resistant CBG plants may be somewhat more difficult to control than glyphosate sensitive CBS in riparian habitats, grass seed production fields and some hayfields and pastures, but can still be managed using a variety of currently available methods." Based on that, the report stated, the bentgrass "is unlikely to pose a significant weed problem, and there are unlikely to be any adverse consequences as a result of the escape of (the RRCBG) from field trials and its subsequent persistence in the environment."

The decision was met by disappointment and skepticism within the industry, especially considering that in two incidences genetically altered bentgrass seed escaped from trial sites, one in Central Oregon and one in Eastern Oregon, and that the escapes continue to pose infestation problems.

Also, several seed companies have expressed concerns that if GE grass seed is produced in the Willamette Valley, it will put in question their ability to confidently state their seed is free of genetically modified organisms when exporting to countries that are opposed to genetic modification.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture also objected to the deregulation in a comment it submitted during the regulatory review process, citing concerns over Scotts' long-term commitment to eradication efforts of the bentgrass escapes in Central and Eastern Oregon.

In a memorandum of agreement Scotts signed with USDA in September 2015, the company committed to aggressively work to control the escapes through 2018, agreeing to more of an advisory role after that.

ODA stated in its comment that it "is concerned that Oregon growers and landowners will incur the long-term management costs" of controlling the escapes after 2018.

Scotts also is developing genetically modified tall fescue and bluegrass. It is doing so under a technique not regulated by USDA, and as such, does not require regulatory review.

Scotts has said it does not plan to produce the genetically modified grass seed in Oregon.

Oregon seed growers, however, have expressed concern over the potential threat of GE grass seed spreading from home lawns and other landscape situations into the wild, and subsequently, their production fields.



IN THIS ISSUE:

Feds Deregulate GE Bentgrass	1
New Spring Wheat Options Available	2
Slugs, Geese, Voles Topic of Workshop	2
Wheat Prices Expected to Remain Stagnant	3
Low Rust Pressure Expected in Valley Wheat	4
Pyrethroid Insecticides Under Review	5
Council Takes New Approach to Legislative Issues	6
Calendar	6

New Spring Wheat Options Available

Growers looking to plant spring wheat have some new options this year in a Washington State University variety, Seahawk, and a new West Bred variety, WB6121.

Both have shown good resistance to rust, said Oregon State University Extension Cereals Specialist Mike Flowers.

“If you’re thinking about putting spring wheat in, and you’re thinking about not wanting to have to spray it for cost concerns, those two might be options for you,” Flowers said at last month’s Extension seed and cereal crops production meeting in Salem. He added, “They are going to yield about the same as a lot of the other soft white spring wheats that are available to you.”

Among more commonly available wheat seed, Flowers said the varieties Diva and Louise should perform well in Willamette Valley conditions. Both varieties have shown moderate levels of rust resistance, he said.

Among other options, Alturas, Stone and WB6341 “are not very resistant to rust, at all,” Flowers said.

“I would imagine, if you are going to plant spring wheat, Diva and Louise are going to be the easiest ones to find, and there might be some Seahawk around,” Flowers said.

As for planting date, Flowers said getting spring wheat planted in February can be advantageous. “You can take advantage of all that winter moisture that we have, and potentially have a really good

dryland spring wheat crop,” he said. “So, the earlier you can get your spring wheat in, the more options you have, and, potentially, the less irrigation you might need to apply.”

He added that it is important to plant spring wheat no later than April 1. “Obviously, if you have irrigation, you can push that back a little bit,” he said.

He also advised growers to bump up seeding rates to thirty-three seeds per square foot. “Remember, you’re not going to get as many tillers in spring wheat as in winter wheat, so get that seeding rate up,” he said.

Flowers noted growers also can plant winter wheat until as late as mid-February most years. He added that nearly all winter wheat varieties will vernalize and produce a crop, but some are better for that late planting than others.

“If you are going to do that, Goetze, Art Deco, Biancor and Drive are the preferred varieties,” he said. “They are all very spring like, in that they come out of the ground nicely.”

He added that when planting winter wheat late, it is important to bump up seeding rates to around thirty-three seeds per square foot.

“Also,” he said, “keep in mind that when you get into that mid-February timing, you are probably going to get higher yields out of the spring wheats.”

Slugs, Geese, Voles Topic of Workshop

The Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District is putting on a workshop March 9 designed to help Willamette Valley farmers minimize damage from slugs, geese and voles while utilizing conservation practices.

“We’re motivated to provide this learning opportunity to our seed growers and other farmers in the Valley to promote the mutual goals of soil and water conservation and farming,” said Stacey Garrison, resource conservationist with the district.

“We are hoping to promote strategies for farmers to continue utilizing conservation practices, such as cover crops and reduced tilling, while keeping crop losses at tolerable levels,” she said.

The program includes presentations from Oregon State University College of Agricultural Sciences assistant professor Rory McDonnell, who is one of the leading slug experts in the country. McDonnell will address, among other topics, biocontrol options in slugs.

Marianne Brooks, of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, will speak on the department’s Open Fields Program for goose management.

The program includes a raptor presentation from the Chintimini Wildlife Center in Corvallis. And Garrison will speak on diagnostics, monitoring and pest identification.

Participants also will have an opportunity for interacting with experts in interactive booths during the final hour of the workshop.

Cost for the workshop is five dollars without lunch and ten dollars with lunch.

The March 9 workshop begins with check-in at 8:30 a.m., with the first speaker starting at 9 a.m. It ends at 3 p.m.

It is being held at the Western Oregon University Hamersly Library, Room 107, 345 Monmouth Avenue North, Monmouth.

Pre-registration is required. Interested parties can pre-register by calling Polk County SWCD at 503-623-9680, extension 101, or online at www.polkswcd.com/biocontrol.html.

Garrison noted the district has applied to the Oregon Department of Agriculture for pesticide applicator credits.

Wheat Prices Expected to Remain Stagnant

Don't look for wheat prices to rebound anytime soon. That was the message delivered by U.S. Wheat Associates Deputy Director Shawn Campbell in a presentation at an OSU Extension seed and cereal crop production meeting in Salem January 10.

"The main reason is just the fact that we are growing more wheat than the world needs," Campbell said. He added that white wheat stocks in the U.S. are higher than they've been at any time in the past ten years.

A downward trend in prices that has been in motion for the past several years led to a decrease in acres planted to wheat last year, Campbell said. But, he said, "At the same time, in most of the states, we saw record to near record yields. So, even though we had a cut in acres, the yields more than made up for the difference."

Among market forces affecting Northwest wheat sales is a new reality that Russia and Europe are producing "a lot of cheap wheat," Campbell said, which is pricing the Northwest's high-quality soft white wheat out of markets where the Northwest formerly competed.

"In the past, we always had two major types of buyers of soft white," Campbell said. "We had the quality buyer that wanted a maximum 10.5 or maximum 9.5 protein, such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan. Then we had the unspecified buyers that bought soft white because it was cheap, like Egypt and the Middle East.

"Well, today, we have Russia and Europe that are growing a lot of cheap wheat – more cheap wheat than the world needs – and the soft white market no longer gets these undecided buyers, because we can't compete for them anymore."

Campbell noted that if Northwest producers wanted to sell wheat to Egypt, for example, the export price out of Portland would have to be \$4.33 per bushel. "Which means that you guys here around Salem would probably get around \$3.80 a bushel," he said. "And if we wanted to make as much money at that price, we would have to increase yields by eighteen percent.

"So this isn't a problem that we can just raise yields to get out of," he said. "We live in a world today where we can't just be the cheapest seller of wheat."



Campbell said certain markets still are buying wheat for quality specs, including Korea. "Korea is very different than Egypt," he said. "Korea is buying your wheat, because they like the quality. That is the reason they are buying from us.

"Realistically, those other types of wheat don't make the same products as soft white, or, if they do, they don't make as good of products as soft white," he said.

"Really, soft white's only competition in the world for quality products is soft red winter, and we have a lot of benefits over the soft red winter markets that come out of the Gulf," Campbell said. "We have lower moisture, lower dockage, lower levels of mycotoxins and fewer issues with falling numbers, even given this year."

He added that the U.S. is seeing growing demand for soft white wheat in areas of Southeast Asia, Latin America and China, where demand for high-quality wheat is rising.

One caution Campbell put out was that maintaining dominance in quality markets will be contingent upon maintaining quality.

"If we want to continue to sell soft white in the market, we have to make sure that we keep growing quality products," he said, "because we can no longer compete growing just cheap wheat."

CONNECT WITH US

To sign-up for this e-newsletter or for archived issues, please visit:
<http://www.oregonseedcouncil.org/seed-update>

THE E-NEWSLETTER

The goal of this e-newsletter is to provide timely updates to Oregon seed producers and field reps. It includes a snapshot of what's happening currently with respect to weather, pest and disease outbreaks, harvest, label updates, and other management activities. Growers or field reps can provide input anytime at mitchlies@comcast.net.

Low Rust Pressure Expected in Valley Wheat

Reports of high rust pressure in wheat east of the Cascades have no bearing on rust pressure in the Willamette Valley, said Oregon State University cereals pathologist Chris Mundt.

Rust pressure in the Valley, in fact, is expected to be light this year, Mundt said.

“Stripe rust has not been heavy over here the last couple of years, and those October rains pushed back a lot of seeding, and (wheat) acres are probably down because of pricing,” Mundt said. “So my guess is we aren’t going to have a really bad year in terms of stripe rust.”

Still, Mundt said, it is never a good idea to underestimate rust.

“Even if you have a variety that has been resistant in the past, make sure you get out there and take a look at it,” he said. “If you see any rust popping up in your field, you definitely want to throw some fungicide in with your herbicide. If you are growing a susceptible variety and any of your neighbors have it, you definitely will want to spray, as well.”

In a presentation at OSU Extension’s seed and cereal crop production meeting in Salem January 10, Mundt also spoke about sharp eyespot, noting the disease that first appeared in Oregon in 2014 is probably here to stay.

“It is here, unfortunately, and it is probably something we are going to have to deal with forever,” he said.

The disease struck Willamette Valley wheat in a big way in 2014 and returned at very high levels in 2015 before tapering off last year.

“Last year I didn’t see quite as much as I’ve seen previously,” he said.

“I think to a great extent that was due to the fact that we have a lot of acres of Bobtail and Rosalyn out right now, and, in general, those two varieties have been holding up fairly well against it,” he said.

“However, I was in a field (of Biancor) ... and I expect they probably took at least a fifty percent yield loss in that field due to sharp eyespot, and I saw a field of Kaseburg that was hit pretty hard,” he said.

Mundt added that while Bobtail and Rosalyn are holding up well against sharp eyespot, he has seen a couple of examples over the last few years where both varieties exhibited more symptoms of the disease than expected.



“I don’t know exactly what is up with that,” he said. “We are going to keep an eye on that. But, in general, Bobtail and Rosalyn have been holding up.”

Mundt added that early seeding can exacerbate problems with the disease.

“I have found in my trial plots that planting date is playing a really important role in sharp eyespot,” he said.

Also, he said, new evidence is showing the disease’s pathogen has a sexual stage, which makes it more likely the disease is a prime candidate for fungicide resistance.

Mundt encouraged growers to apply the SDHI class of fungicides no more than once per season, optimally at flag leaf, to slow the development of resistance to available fungicides.

“The reason for that is we get our biggest bang for the buck with Septoria at that flag-leaf timing,” he said. “You don’t want to be wasting these SDHIs on an early application. You want to save the big guns for the flag-leaf application.”

Pyrethroid Insecticides Under Review

By Steve Salisbury, Oregon Seed Council Research & Regulatory Coordinator

Adding to the concern regarding insecticide use and the elimination of chlorpyrifos that is being considered, now the pyrethroid insecticides are under review at the EPA. As for grass seed insecticides, there are not many affordable effective options available outside of chlorpyrifos and the pyrethroid materials. That said, it is prudent that producers, commodity groups and associations voice their concern and support to the EPA for pyrethroids.

The EPA is reviewing the use of pyrethroids in all U.S. crops and the potential human health risks and possible environmental impacts associated with their use. This is a standard review that the agency conducts on all registered pesticides. Typically, these registration reviews lead to either loss of uses or further restrictions of uses.

Here are the pyrethroids under review and some trade names for reference: bifenthrin (Brigade), cypermethrins (Mustang Max), cyhalothrins (Warrior), deltamethrins (Suspend), esfenvalerate (Asana), fenpropathrin (Danitrol), permethrin (several), tefluthrin (Force), cyfluthrin (Baythroid). There are several generic brands and combination products containing these materials that will be effected by this review as well.

The public comment period has been extended through March 31. You can make comment by following the link to the EPA docket, www.regulations.gov/docket?D=EPA-HQ-OPP-2010-0480. When making comment, you should refer to specific pyrethroids that are important to you, or state you are providing support for the entire class of pyrethroids.

Some key benefits to pyrethroids for agriculture production include:

- Provide a low cost option for insect control that leads to good return on investment;
- Provide effective broad spectrum control of insect pests;
- Key tool in resistance management strategies where there are limited options;
- Low risk pesticide option for insect pests;
- Manageable short pre-harvest intervals;
- Globally accepted and established tolerances/maximum residue limits (MRL) for commodity export markets;
- Provide good applicator and farm worker safety.



If chlorpyrifos is eliminated from use in U.S. agriculture food crop production, then there will be more emphasis on pyrethroid use to control insect pests. This pending chlorpyrifos regulation coupled with the possible loss of or further restrictions on the use of pyrethroids would put an incredible strain on agriculture to achieve effective and economically viable insect control.

It is worth mentioning that delays in new EPA regulations are expected due to the executive order from President Donald Trump's office putting a moratorium on new regulations. It is also expected that new regulations will begin to slowly trickle out of the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. This delay will likely affect the chlorpyrifos ruling as well as the pyrethroid comment-period deadline. Stay tuned.

Council Takes New Approach to Legislative Issues

By Roger Beyer

The Oregon Seed Council is taking a new approach to how it is dealing with legislative issues of importance to our members.

The Council's Legislative Committee has decided to create key contacts for different categories of issues. For labor issues, Kevin Doerfler will take the lead. For pesticide issues, Macey Wessels is taking the lead. For taxes and regulation, Eric Bowers is the lead contact. And for all other categories, Brian Glaser is taking the lead.

To date, it looks like Kevin Doerfler will be the busiest among the key contacts as labor issues dominate bills of concern among the first 1,500 bills lawmakers introduced.

In all, there are about 40 bills ([click here](#)) of significance to Seed Council members in that first batch of bills, all of which were introduced January 9, the opening day of the Legislature's organizational session.

If you click on the hyperlink, you will notice the category the bills fall under is listed in the far right column.

The session kicked into full swing February 1, and I expect there will be many more bills of significance to Council members introduced over the next thirty days. In all, we will probably have about 3,000 bills to monitor, or twice as many as were introduced January 9.

Stay tuned, we will be updating you on important developments as they happen. And please be prepared to drop everything at an instant's notice and get a message to your legislator or come to Salem to testify.

If anyone wants to volunteer to help on one or more of these issue teams, please contact the Seed Council office in Salem at 503-585-1157, and we can put you in touch with the team leader(s) or email me at roger@rwbeyer.com.

CALENDAR

February 8	Clover Growers Annual Meeting, 9 a.m., Wilsonville Holiday Inn, 25425 S.W. 95th Avenue, Wilsonville
February 10	North Valley CORE Pesticide Training, 8 a.m.-noon, Forest Grove Elks Lodge, 2810 Pacific Ave., Forest Grove
February 13	Fine Fescue Commission Meeting, 7 a.m., Elmer's Restaurant, 3950 Market St. N.E., Salem
February 21	Ryegrass Commission Meeting, 6 p.m., Cascade Grill Restaurant, 110 Opal Street NE, Albany
February 28	Oregon Seed Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Cascade Grill Restaurant, 110 Opal St. N.E., Albany
March 9	Geese, Slugs & Voles: Biocontrol Options workshop, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Western Oregon University Hamersly Library, Room 107, 345 Monmouth Ave. N., Monmouth
March 22	Clover Commission Meeting, 7 a.m., Roth's West Salem, 1130 Wallace Road N.W., Salem