

## Gleanings from the Montana Wheat & Barley Committee



By Kent Kupfner, Executive Director  
October 1, 2024

### **MGEA Golf Tournament**

Members of the commercial grain industry are key partners in the successful accomplishment of our overarching mission at MWBC. The academic scholarships funded by the Montana Grain Elevator Association (MGEA) are an excellent way to support the next generation of agricultural professionals. I enjoyed a perfect day in Choteau piloting the MWBC-sponsored beverage cart during the annual MGEA golf tournament and scholarship fundraiser. The opportunity to network with industry members while discussing harvest results, transportation issues and cash markets was invaluable. Moreover, helping keep their whistles wet improved my popularity! MWBC enjoys working closely with MGEA and highly values our longstanding relationship.

### **Grant Cycle Opens**

Our 2025 grant cycle is open September 16 - October 14. We are excited to receive and review this year's applications. We recently sat down with Tiziana Oppedisano and Ricardo Pinto, new MSU faculty members from the Western Triangle and Northern Agricultural Research Centers. These new scientists are bringing energy and fresh ideas to their respective research centers including using satellite data and UAV's to map weed infestations for site-specific weed management while utilizing trapping and remote sensing data to quantify wheat stem sawfly infestation. They also discussed concern, and subsequent research, related to grasshoppers and hessian flies.



Recent wheat stem sawfly damage on a 2024 durum crop, Sheridan County

### **2024 Harvest Samples & Crop Quality Reports**

MWBC helps coordinate efforts to collect representative samples of recently harvested malt barley, winter, spring and durum wheat. These samples are used to determine the average quality factors of the crops. Factors such as protein, test weight and falling number along with end-use testing characteristics are evaluated using a composite of these samples with the resulting data used to promote US wheat and

barley domestically and internationally. These crop quality reports will be published in October, and I will be traveling overseas in November to present the results to buyers in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and China. It takes a great deal of effort to collect samples from all over Montana's production areas and mail them to Bozeman, Fargo and Manhattan (KS) for analysis. MWBC thanks all the growers and commercial grain companies that provided approximately 355 samples—enough to acquire a sample size so that where the resulting data can be published in reliable quality reports.

### **Variety Surveys**

The annual MWBC-funded wheat and barley variety surveys were recently released. I'm pleased to note the trend of MSU released varieties dominating the planted acreage of winter and spring wheat continues and the top two planted varieties of each class are MSU releases! The continued funding of MSU breeding programs is integral in this success. We are very optimistic that recently released MSU durum and barely varieties will be more prevalent as top choices in the future. The survey responses strongly indicate MWBC should continue to focus research efforts and investments on developing wheat and barley varieties that are sawfly resistant, winter hardy, drought tolerant, possess heavy test weights, mature early and have superior end-use characteristics. In addition, the results citing estimated yearly losses from sawfly damage reinforces the importance of continuing to fund research looking for additional ways to mitigate the damages caused by this vexing insect. The complete survey results can be found here: <https://montanawbc.com/producers/research>

### **Seeding Season**

Although Montana can always use more moisture, winter wheat seeding is progressing near the five-year average pace with seeding well over 50 percent complete at the end of September. Seeding conditions are variable around the state, but most producers report adequate to very good seeding conditions. Fall moisture and chem fallow practices are contributing to mostly favorable conditions. The USDA will report final 2024 production results on September 30, and we'll look forward to commenting on those results in October.



MWBC Director Lee Dahlman lays seed in the ground for the 2025 winter wheat crop

**Upcoming Activities**

I'll be in Denver to participate in a meeting with a peer group of state administrators from the other major wheat growing states. HB4 (GMO wheat) cultivation in the US, collaboration, networking and improving our domestic marketing focus are all on the agenda. Lori and I are also looking forward to attending the upcoming MGGA board meeting. MWBC is excited to host three more Japanese trade teams representing Nisshin, Chiba Flour Milling and Nippon next month. We'll wrap up October with a board of directors meeting focused on a preliminary review of the 2025 budget and the CY25 grant requests.

I hope you're enjoying your fall, and that we continue to get our typical moisture. Best of luck with all your planting endeavors. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the MGGA meeting, at a tailgate or perhaps in the field.