

The logo for "OKANOLA Bits" features the word "OKANOLA" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font, with a stylized orange circle containing a black triangle to its left. The word "Bits" is written in a large, black, cursive font to the right of "OKANOLA".

OKANOLA Bits

Bringing Value to Winter Wheat Growers with a Winter Canola Rotation.

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Supported by American Farmers and Ranchers and the Great Plains Canola Association

As we move into a very exciting year for winter canola it is fitting to restate one of our main overall mission statements for this profitable and developing crop. This has been our mission from day one.

Our mission statement for winter canola clearly defines our long term goals.

To provide research, education, and demonstration to stimulate the development of winter canola as a major profitable rotational crop with winter wheat.

The need for a crop rotation was reemphssized by our work with herbicide resistant ryegrass this past crop year. Over 100 ryegrass samples were collect all over the state during the 2008 wheat harvest. When we tested this ryegrass for herbicide resistance we found that Oklahoma wheat growers had a 51% chance of having herbicide resistant ryegrass in their fields. Over the past several years we have advised wheat growers to be on the lookout for ryegrass and control it as soon as they discovered it in their field. We have also warned that ryegrass develops herbicide resistance faster than any other plant species known. Herbicide resistant ryegrass is common in wheat fields in Texas, Arkansas, and several states farther away, but has not been known to be a problem in Oklahoma until now. The results from the ryegrass resistance study explained why many wheat growers are having difficulty controlling ryegrass. The majority of the ryegrass samples demonstrated resistance to all three ALS inhibiting herbicides (Group 2 mode of action) that we evaluated. These included Finesse applied immediately after planting at ½ oz/A followed by an activating rainfall, Osprey and PowerFlex applied postemergence to young actively growing ryegrass. These results suggest that about 5 out of 10 fields have ryegrass that will not be effectively controlled by those herbicides and probably would not be controlled by other Group 2 herbicides such as Amber, OlympusFlex, Beyond, and Clearmax. In northeast OK the odds are about 7 out of 10.

One of the best recommendations to control resistant ryegrass is a crop rotation. Clearly one of the best rotation crops would be a winter broadleaf. This need has provided a spring board for an exciting year for winter canola. The fall of 2009 is off to a very strong start supported by profitability and the opportunity to clean up weeds in

continuous wheat. Seed sales at this time indicate that over 100,000 acres of winter canola will be seeded in OK this fall. This acreage increase is may be even greater because canola is very productibve in OK and performed better than wheat in many areas last year. More importantly, ,the price outlook for wheat is dismal whereas the price for canola is much higher than wheat. The bad outlook for wheat prices next June has been very discouraging to wheat growers across the state. Many of them also took severe penalties for high dockage (cheat, ryegrass, rescuegrass, etc) and foreign material (rye) in their wheat last June. Not surprisingly, the sorry outlook for wheat encouraged a substantial increase in winter canola acreage planted this fall. With mid-September wheat prices around \$3.75 and predicted prices at harvest next June of around \$3.50 to \$4.00, it is not surprising that one major grain operation is predicting that “We will be feeding wheat to livestock next summer”. The wheat situation is aggravated by full terminal elevators and the very slow pace of overseas sales due to economic problems in countries that normally buy US wheat.

In sharp contrast, winter canola prices for delivery next June were around \$7.75 per bushel in mid-September. Also, the demand for canola oil remains strong across all of the USA, as more and more people switch to canola oil as healthy cooking oil. So, it is not a wonder that numerous wheat growers have decided to switch some acreage to winter canola to improve their financial prospects.

As a rule, growers who had canola last year are increasing their acreage this year. They have gotten comfortable with the crop, all the way from sowing it to harvesting it. Most new growers decided to plant one field, and that is a good plan. We advise them to choose a field close to their house so they can watch it and get to know the crop.

We have been busy helping new growers get seeding equipment calibrated to plant 5 pounds per acre, offering advice and suggestions to growers and answering a constant barrage of phone calls about canola over the past several weeks. We have made several interesting observation about what our wheat growers are doing and we thought it might be good to pass some of them along to you.

First, it seems that a majority of growers have decided to plant Roundup Ready canola, and the main reason seems to be the desire to make sure they kill all of the weeds in the canola field. However, some of the growers prefer the conventional varieties and seem to get by quite well with them. Many wheat growers were embarrassed by the wheat they hauled to the elevator last year, and don't want to ever do that again. These growers want to clean up those fields and they seem to generally pick the Roundup Ready varieties.

This was the first year that a Roundup Ready hybrid winter canola was available, and even though the hybrid seed was a little more expensive, most of it was bought up pretty quickly. That is proof to us that OK farmers are quick to catch on to new opportunities. Over the next decade we expect more hybrids to appear and we will gradually move away from open pollinated varieties to hybrids. The move from varieties to hybrids took about 10 years in corn, and will likely take that long for winter canola.

Fertilizer is cheaper and growers put more down before planting and at planting this year. We have had a number of questions about putting fertilizer in the row, and we continue to urge growers to keep the salt content down if it is going to fall right beside the seed. In our research last year we were able to apply half of the total N requirement in the fall, so we are cautiously thinking that ½ of the N down as anhydrous should be

okay, whereas in the past we have advised no more than 1/3 of the N should go down preplant and the rest as a top-dress.

There is a lot more no-till this year, and no till growers have learned to get the trash out of the row when they plant canola. This will reduce over wintering problems we have seen before in canola. As a result, several planted with row crop type planters with trash whippers this fall instead of grain drills. We expect their yields to be close to normal, but this fall they could not get federal crop insurance on rows wider than 16 inches. If these guys harvest a successful crop this year, hopefully we can get the insurance rules changed.

Why do the Oklahoma wheat growers need winter canola?

Because of climatic and soil limitations, most Oklahoma farmers have been locked into a monoculture of winter wheat with practically no crop rotation for the last 50 years. Lack of crop rotation has increased production problems for wheat. One troublesome change has been the large increase in winter annual grassy weed species, including wild oats, jointed goatgrass, ryegrass, cheat, rescuegrass, and rye. Herbicide resistant weeds are becoming a problem. Over the years, wheat growers have tried using summer rotational crops in efforts to break disease cycles and limit weed problems. Success with soybeans, corn, and sorghum has been highly variable due to low rainfall-use-efficiency during the hot dry summers in the Great Plains and inadequate heat stress tolerance in these crops. Oklahoma growers need a profitable winter rotational crop with winter wheat that is not a host to the diseases of cereal grain crops and that will permit use of alternative weed control strategies.

Tailgate Talk: Heath Sanders

Over the month of August and into the 1st week of September winter canola production meetings were held across the state. Topics included varieties, planting strategies, fertility, insect awareness, harvest options, and marketing. While the wheat prices kept declining, canola prices still looked profitable. Farmers that I had the opportunity to visit with were looking for a rotational crop that would provide a good return on investment. Canola price continues to be hovering around \$7.50 to 8.00/ bu and wheat \$3.60-3.90/bu. Farmers have become more receptive to winter canola, because of its profit potential and its value for cleaning up wheat fields.

Winter canola planting is wrapping up across the state and stand evaluations are being made. Ideally a producer would like to have 7-8 plants per foot, but good yields have been obtained from stands of 1 to 3 per plants per foot of row. Canola stands do not have to be as visible down the row as wheat in order to qualify as a “good stand”. Canola plants have much more opportunity in the spring to branch out and compensate for the holes and spaces in the field.

Controlling weeds when the canola is small is very important. A good rule of thumb is to spray weeds 6 weeks after planting to get the first flush of weeds. This allows the crop to take advantage of moisture and nutrients available and enable plants to cover the ground. When spring approaches a second sequential application can be made before bolting to get any weeds that may have come up late or escaped from the first application. Waiting in the fall until all weeds have emerged to spray may result in stand

and yield loss. We expect to start seeing Diamond back moth worm larvae this fall. They show up first on the bigger canola that was seeded early. Diamond back moth worms are green looper type insects that are foliage feeders. They are easy noted in the field by the irregular shaped holes they chew in the leaves. Also, be on the lookout for armyworms. They can do a lot of damage in a short period of time. Winter canola requires more management than a typical wheat crop, but has the opportunity to make your farming operation much more profitable. Please pay attention to your fields and know what is going on in them.

For more information on winter Canola visit these web sites:

<http://greatplainscanola.com/> Subscribe to online GPCA newsletter.

<http://www.canola.okstate.edu>

<http://uscanola.com/>

Or Contact your local OSU County Extension Office

Heath Sanders can be contracted at the Enid, Oklahoma OSU Extension Office.