

Variety Selection

Info From Ky. Small Grain Variety Test Can Help Farmers Choose Varieties

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The small grain variety testing program of the University of Kentucky, coordinated by Bill Bruening, research specialist, was among the topics discussed at the UK Wheat Field Day.

"We evaluate wheat and barley varieties in Kentucky," Bruening said. "A few important points I'd like to make is that our data is now available online at our website. If people search online for Kentucky variety test they can access our data, typically in mid-July, whereas before you had to wait for the printed publication to come out in mid-August. We pushed data availability up a whole month." The website address is <www.uky.edu/Ag/wheatvarietytest>.

Bruening said other new technological advancements will allow UK researchers to process grain weights and moisture quicker, so that the results could even be available online in early July.

Bill Bruening, Research Specialist, University of Kentucky, discusses their small grain variety testing program.

Photo by John LaRose, Jr.

"Within our variety test bulletin we not only evaluate varieties for grain yield potential, which is the primary focus, but we also measure grain test weight, plant height, plant maturity, disease reaction and lodging," he said. "We also have a test to evaluate varietal differences in forage potential, because 25 percent of our wheat acreage in Kentucky is not harvested for grain. The majority of that acreage is used for forage production."

Forage production is very important in Kentucky and wheat forage provides a good source of quality forage at a time when the previous fall's or summer forage supplies have diminished in quantity or have deteriorated in quality.

"Wheat's vigorous lush spring growth can really fit in well for some cattle producers," Bruening added. "We also have a straw yield test where we evaluate varietal differences in post grain harvest straw yield potential; this research is beneficial for both growers who are marketing straw for a crop as well as those marketing for grain. In Central Kentucky, with the horse

industry, the straw is often more valuable than the grain itself."

That's one important reason why Bruening developed that test. It's probably the only test of its kind in the country that actually looks at straw yield among varieties.

"For growers in Western Kentucky where there may be less of a demand for straw, a lot of growers are interested in low residue or short, low



straw varieties, so they can harvest the wheat and not have a lot of residual straw inhibiting their double crop soybean development. So this type of test has benefits for different types of wheat growers."

The University of Kentucky's variety test bulletin also has disease rating information that also gives growers what they need to know when they make the decision as to which variety they're going to plant.

"They can factor in not only yield and test weight, but also the disease reaction among varieties," Bruening said. "There is a substantial difference among the different genetics out here. So it could influence their management practices." Δ

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