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## Long season wheats pose stem rust risk

**The risks of developing stem rust in longer season winter wheat crops are being highlighted as New South Wales wheat growers begin to prepare for the 2015 growing season.**

Plant pathologist for the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries Dr Andrew Milgate said growers needed to be aware of the susceptibility ratings of the long-season wheats and to ensure they plan appropriately to manage any rust outbreaks.

“Some of the longer season winter wheats are attractive for their high yield but the problem is that some of them have susceptible or very susceptible ratings to stem rust and this is made worse by a greatly shortened break between crops over summer in the long season cropping areas,” he said.

“Rust needs a green living host, often called the green bridge, to survive between the seasons. Normally this is in the form of volunteer cereals growing as weeds, however, in the areas where these long season wheats are grown, the natural summer break between crops is greatly reduced. This therefore requires greater monitoring and rust management planning to prepare for any potential outbreaks.

“Stem rust is the most difficult of the three types of rust to control with fungicide as it is difficult for foliar fungicides to penetrate the canopy and protect the stem.”

Dr Milgate advised that growers choosing a long-season wheat obtain information on that variety’s susceptibility rating from the breeding company or their local advisor before seeding and ensure they have an effective stem rust monitoring plan in place.

“There are other long-season wheat varieties available that have a higher stem rust resistance rating, including Bolac, Forrest, EGA-Wedgetail, Manning and SQP Revenue, and we recommend that growers should, if possible, look to growing these or others with stem rust resistance in the next season,” he said.

“In Australia, by choosing more resistant varieties, growers have protected each other from these types of losses. Rust control is everyone’s responsibility.”

**ENDS**

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*The Australian Cereal Rust Control Program (ACRCP, established in 1973) monitors cereal rust pathogens throughout Australia, finds and characterises new sources of rust resistance, and assists Australian cereal breeding groups to incorporate rust resistance in new cultivars. The ACRCP is funded largely by the grains industry, through the Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC).*

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