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Advertorial

HIGH YIELDING ultra-flexible Hybrid Fall Rye a great fit for cattle producers



Hybrid Fall Rye ready to chop for silage.

If you read the word 'rye' and assume low yields and few attractive benefits, get ready to have your mind changed. Plant breeding leader KWS, together with seed distributor FP Genetics, now offers four recent-to-Canada hybrid fall rye (HFR) varieties with impressive yield, lots of flexibility and, best of all, double cropping potential.

Conventional rye technology has been relatively unchanged for years and, therefore, has fallen behind crops like canola, hard red

wheat and oats. Conventional rye just isn't that attractive to grow, which is why it's usually relegated to the worst land where farmers want to use a low-cost strategy to manage risk. That's about to change.

"For so long, rye has been treated as a weed, a cover crop, something extra but not a primary crop," says Dr. Becca Stokes, a livestock nutritionist for KWS. "I encourage people to look at hybrid rye as a completely new crop. We start with these new, far superior genetics, and then we're talking precision ag, precision planting, managing it like the true high yielding crop that it is. At first producers are skeptical. When they see the science behind it and see that, not only is it comparable to other cereals for feed value, it offers huge flexibility, then they get excited."

In Europe, HFR has been planted extensively for over 20 years and boasts very strong commercial uptake. Here at home, however, the crop, which was first introduced to the North American market only five years ago, is relatively unfamiliar to most Canadian producers.

HFR is fairly similar to barley, triticale and wheat for quality, though its somewhat higher sugar means it is slightly sweeter tasting. "We're looking at HFR as a replacement for barley or wheat, as we think it will perform very similarly in a feedlot situation," says Stokes.

Jordan Kolk, operations manager for Kolk Farms Ltd., a feedyard near Iron Springs, Alberta, thinks HFR grown for silage has a clear fit in his rotation.

"We've been growing fall rye since 2015," he says. "In terms of feed quality, I'd say it's been consistent with our winter wheat as long as it's taken early enough. Tonnage wise, we see probably a 20% advantage over spring cereals. What I really like about it, though, is it give us the opportunity for a double crop. The hemp we grow for grain needs to be in the ground July 1. That's doable with fall rye because we can get silage off in June."

HFR can be cut for silage at two stages. Cut at flag leaf, HFR silage will be an extremely high quality silage with lots of green biomass. Crude protein will hit 15% or

higher and digestibility can be in the 85%+ range due to low lignification and lower NDF (neutral detergent fiber). Comparatively, swath grazed barley's crude protein is typically about 13% and digestibility is about 75%. This means HFR cut at flag leaf increases dry matter intake and results in faster body-weight gain.

The second option is to cut HFR silage at the milky stage. While its crude protein will be lower (generally in the 8-9% range) and lignification will have increased, cutting later typically doubles a producer's silage tonnage. Silage production trials by FP Genetics showed HFR produced 20 to 30% more than barley and 15% more than conventional rye in dry matter at the milky stage.

"The decision on when to cut HFR for silage really depends on your production system," says Stokes. "If you need that high quality, high crude protein, you're going to cut at flag leaf. But if you're feeding where tonnage is a priority, it's better to cut at the milky stage."

In order to get your cutting timing right, watch your HFR crop very carefully.



“HFR grows very quickly in the spring,” says Stokes. “In a week it can get right through the flag leaf stage. If you’re cutting other small grain cereal silage, that rapid growth means you can spread your workload by getting your HFR down before your other crops.”

HFR is planted between mid-August and mid-September and is ready for silage harvest in June or grain harvest in early August. The early silage harvest gives a producer like Kolk opportunity to optimize yield by planting a second crop late.

“It fits in our rotation and fits with our operation,” he says. “It’s currently probably 20% of our forage program

and, yes, we’ll definitely continue. For us, it’s a matter of risk management and managing inventories. We think it’s a good tool, especially since there’s always value in keeping a crop rotation diverse.”

Operating on sandy soils in Alberta’s wind-prone south, Kolk also values HFR as a winter cover.

While Kolk grows all of his HFR for silage, the crop can also be grown for grazing and/or grain. Many producers, in fact, seed it without being certain exactly how they’ll ultimately use it: they might aim to harvest it as a grain or silage in June but, should they run out of other pasture

crops, appreciate the flexibility of using it as a fall or early spring graze instead.

“HFR offers another way to manage risk and workload. One year, a guy might need it to fill in holes in his grazing. Another year, he might realise his perennial pasture is doing fine into the fall, so he can just leave his HFR and use it in the spring. That kind of diverse flexibility can be really important when you’re producing beef and you just don’t know what a given year is going to throw at you,” says Herman Wehrle, director of market development for FP Genetics, the company that distributes all of the hybrid rye varieties currently sold across Canada.

Though it does take good management to execute, it is also possible to graze in fall or spring and achieve a silage crop as well, adds Stokes.

Currently, FP Genetics, KWS and researchers at various institutions are conducting additional research on how to optimize HFR.

“On the beef side, we’re really early days,” says Wehrle. “There are things we don’t know yet in terms of management when you’re mixing a forage or grazing with grain production. And, we have more to learn about double cropping too. We believe it’s a bigger opportunity and that it could benefit farmers in a much wider geographic area than we first

thought, but there’s still work to be done.”

Wehrle expects continued, relatively moderate increases of HFR acreage over the next few years until interest reaches a critical mass. Then, he says, he expects it to really take off.

“The feeding of cattle is always changing and evolving,” adds Stokes. “The producers trying to be the best are constantly looking for new options and novel ways to be most efficient and cost effective. HFR definitely offers a viable way to feed cattle at an attractive cost. I expect more and more producers will be interested.”

HFR is currently available in Canada from Union Forage. ■



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Money is the root of survival on the family farm

By BJ Smith

It's the lifestyle! We've heard that since the beginning of time toiling the land and working 7 days a week to provide the necessities of life to an ever growing smug and clueless society. No, it's not enough to have this storied lifestyle. We need a future for our children and comfort in our old age nursing aches caused by endless injuries and bodily stress from this lifestyle.

Statistically, the only profession or obsession that is more hazardous than ours is

commercial fishermen. The fishermen share the constant battle with the elements and need to confront physical challenges day and night. Some technical changes such as cameras in calving pens have lessened the solo late night check, however, these tools come with a price tag. Cabs on combines, swathers, balers and other farm equipment have shielded drivers from the elements. Sprayers are more efficient with GPS to assist navigation. Upgrading to

these improvements carry a huge monetary commitment. Elevated machinery prices and maintenance have NOT kept even with the price of stock and crops.

To survive, small family holdings have had to morph into larger and larger operations. More land means carrying increased mortgages and ballooning lines of credit. Coupled with ever raising interest rates. Few operating loans have locked-in interest rates and over the years it's not been

uncommon for the rates to jump several points in a short period, without corresponding commodity increases. Producers, well established, can weather these trends but a young producer or an operation in the midst of expanding can easily be caught in the squeeze.

Economists and loan institutions predict and analyze 'ad nauseum', never able to take into consideration that a few extra dollars needed to service the debt load was needed to pay the orthodontist, replace glasses or hire a caregiver for an aging parent. Businesses provide benefits in health care and pensions. Ordinary mom and pop agricultural holdings have no such safety net. Needless to say, anyone trying to maintain any kind of dignified old age would be hard pressed to manage on the Old Age Security Pension. Private personal insurances coupled with farm insurance is a huge bite

out of the funds after all the other bills are satisfied.

There are few politicians going to address the plight of the family farm in the next few months leading up to the election. The few dollars allowed for farm fuel and the relief from GST in the form of rebates are an indication that something can be done. We are all in agreement that the tax burden on the ordinary Canadian family is heavy. The added taxes on fuel and utilities are cruel for farmers. Two falls in a row harvesting has been difficult, however, the cost of running a grain dryer is ridiculous.

Expensive veterinary bills, providing schooling or any extra activities for family, household expenses that any home incurs usually comes from a family member having an off farm job. No wonder that our farm population is aging and the younger generation hesitates to enjoy our "lifestyle". ■

Local beef supply chain in Indonesia is too long

The supply chain of local beef in Indonesia should be shortened. The Center for Indonesian Policy Studies (CIPS) said this leads to higher prices at consumer level. CIPS Researcher Assyifa Szami Ilman, said the supply chain starts from farmers that sell their beef cattle to small traders or feedlots. This continues to big-scale traders, regional traders, traders at slaughterhouses, big traders at traditional markets, until small retailers in traditional markets and finally end consumers. Each step result in additional costs, she added. "Local beef needs 7-9 steps to reach end consumers, while imported beef only entails two steps," she said.



We have had great success with the perennial pasture mixtures, the various legumes and grasses helped increase our production while lowering fertilizers costs. Cover crops after silage or green feed is beginning to be an integral part of our operation to help extend our fall/early winter grazing season with a high-quality feed.

Braden Douglass,
Douglass Agro Ltd., Gem, AB

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Perry Rasmuson, Moosomin, SK



I've made my pastures work for me summer and winter, thanks to the Union Forage guys. You can trust what they tell you. The Union Forage swath-grazing mixture was seeded in June, it grew well and created a lot of forage for the cows as well as putting energy and nitrogen into the soil. The Goliath forage rape is frost resistant to -10 C, so it keeps growing late into the year.

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