

## 2013 Wheat Yield Contest Results

Three Kansas wheat farmers have each earned \$1,000 by winning their respective regions in the 2013 Kansas Wheat Yield Contest.

Ron Ohlde, Palmer, won the Central Region with a yield of 93.57 bushels per acre with the Westbred variety Cedar; Leland Johnson, Westmoreland, won the Eastern Region with a 78.7 bushel per acre yield from the Kansas Wheat Alliance variety Everest and Chuck Downey, St. Francis, won the Western Region by getting 70.05 bushels per acre from the Syngenta variety SY Wolf.

"The yield contest highlights success stories of how Kansas farmers are maximizing yield potential and producing high quality wheat for the marketplace," says Justin Gilpin, chief executive officer of Kansas Wheat, "It also serves as an educational opportunity for producers to learn new management strategies for improved wheat production."

Kansas Governor Sam Brownback will present prize checks and plaques to the winners at the Kansas State Fair in Hutchinson. The brief presentation will take place at 2:30 p.m. September 14, at the Kansas Wheat Exhibit inside the Pride of Kansas Building.

Cash prizes of \$1,000 come from Kansas Wheat and BASF, the lead corporate sponsor of the Kansas Wheat Yield Contest. In addition, the Kansas Wheat Alliance, Westbred and Syngenta will provide \$500 cash awards to each winner. Other sponsors include Bayer CropScience and Plains Gold.

More information about the winning yield entries follows:

### **Western Kansas: Chuck Downey, St. Francis**

Moisture is often the limiting factor in Cheyenne County, where Chuck Downey achieved a 70.05 bushel per acre yield with the Syngenta variety, SY Wolf, to take the Western Region of the Kansas Wheat Yield Contest. Downey says his contest field received less than five-inches of precipitation from planting to harvest.



This is the second Yield Contest win for Chuck, who farms and ranches with his wife, Megan and her father, Walter Douthit, who owns much of the land Chuck farms. Walter has been supportive of Chuck's efforts to improve wheat yields over the years, which include improving crop health by using micro-nutrients and fungicide.

The contest field is silty clay loam that last year had been in wheat. He planted the crop Oct. 12, applying 1.03 million seeds per acre. The seed was treated with Cruiser Maxx and Cruiser 5FS to ward off disease and insect threats.

The contest field received 24 gallons of 28-0-0-5, using streambars. At Feekes 5 (final tillering stage), Downey sprayed 6 ounces of zinc, 5.5 pounds of magnesium sulfate, Coron and Ele-max, plus the herbicides Barrage and Ally, plus the fungicide Tilt. At Feekes 10.1 (beginning of heading stage), he applied another round of zinc, magnesium sulfate, Coron and Ele-max, plus the fungicide

Twinline.

In all, Downey made four post-emerge passes across the field to apply crop protectant products. That's more than most farmers would make, but Downey makes sure the investment has a chance to pay off. "It is important not to put the inputs on the crop until there is yield potential," he says. "Each time I put more money into the crop, I make sure there is enough potential return on investment to pay for it."

Although 2013 wasn't a year in which diseases were of utmost concern, Downey applied two shots of fungicide anyway. The applications kept the plant greener longer, which he believes prolongs the grainfill period, adding bushels to the field.

"The herbicide tends to delay harvest, which can be nerve-wracking when storm clouds begin to gather in the west," he admits. "I have sandy soils that tend to be ready to cut earlier, so by using fungicide on our heavier soils I can spread out harvest a bit."

*Yield: 70.05 bushels per acre*

*Variety: SY Wolf, Syngenta*

*Certified Seed Source: Mattson Farms, Colby*

### **Central Region: Ron Ohlde, Palmer**

Washington County farmer Ron Ohlde attributes top wheat yields to a "systems approach" of production that includes soil sampling, variety selection, seed treatments, fertilization and fungicide application.

Ohlde, whose family runs Ohlde Seed Farms near Palmer, begins the crop with top-quality certified seed that has been length-graded and treated with Servo DP. He plants 1.2 million seeds per acre, with a goal of getting two- to three-tillers per plant

Herbicide application depends on what the plans are after wheat: if he wants to be able to plant double-crop beans after wheat harvest, he uses a contact herbicide. Otherwise, Finesse and 2,4-D are used most of the time.

"We're in a good area that receives adequate rainfall most years," Ohlde says. "We can kind of push the envelope a bit when it comes to wheat yields. Most of the time it pays off."

The contest field had been no-tilled for nine years. He applied 120 pounds of dry fertilizer along with eight pounds of sulfur and three-quarter pounds of zinc prior to planting; and topdressed with 30 gallons of 28% per acre plus about seven gallons of chloride.

Fungicide applications included four ounces of Headline at greenup in the spring, and additional 14 ounces of Quilt at flagleaf.

Participation in the Kansas Wheat Yield Contest gives Ohlde a chance to compare his operation to others.

"I love to see how my operation stacks up. It boils down to testing. You've got to test varieties, fertilizer types and rates. Every field and every operation is different, but we can learn from each other," he says.

*Yield: 93.57 bushels per acre*

*Variety: Cedar, Westbred*

*Certified Seed Source: Ohlde Seed Farms*

### **Eastern Region: Leland Johnson, Wamego**

Most years, wheat isn't a big crop on Johnson Brothers Farm in Pottawatomie County, says Leland Johnson, one of the partners in the family farm. But a good crop in 2012, plus a contest-winning 78.7 bushel per acre yield in 2013, has Leland thinking that wheat could play a much larger role.

"We like wheat as a source of summer income," he says, "but we haven't planted a lot of wheat in the last few years."

The partnership won the Eastern Region using the Kansas Wheat Alliance variety Everest. Johnson planted 1.4 million seeds per acre on September 24. The theory was that planting early and heavy would allow the crop to take advantage of early fall rain showers, and give it time to tiller.

"We maybe got a little lucky," he says of the rain showers that did occur last fall.

The contest field had been planted to wheat in 2012; after harvest, it was plowed. Prior to planting, 100 pounds of 18-46-0 fertilizer was spread; 80 pounds of 28% was applied in a spring topdress application. The field received one-third ounce of Finesse herbicide in late March as the crop was tillering. Twelve ounces of the fungicide Quilt applied at flag leaf.

Johnson says he was eager to see how his yield would compare to other eastern Kansas wheat farmers. "I knew we had a good stand, and a shot at a good wheat crop headed into winter," Leland says. "I was just intrigued to see if we would be among the top entries. It's been fun."

*Yield: 78.7 bushels per acre*

*Wheat Variety: Everest, Kansas Wheat Alliance*

*Certified Seed Source: Ruetti Seed Farms*

### **Chuck Downey Wins the 2013 Quality Initiative**

The 2013 Yield Contest also features a quality component that measures protein, test weight and milling and baking quality. Chuck Downey, Western Region winner from St. Francis, also won the 2013 Quality Initiative with Syngenta's variety SY Wolf, and as such, will receive a \$250 cash prize. Downey's sample featured 61.5 pound test weight, 14.1 protein, plus excellent mill and bake characteristics, with an emphasis on dough mix times, strength and loaf volume.

"The milling industry is dependent upon high-quality wheat grown in Kansas. The Kansas Wheat Yield Contest Quality Initiative highlights the genetics and farming practices that deliver high quality products to the milling industry," Gilpin says.

The quality evaluation was conducted at the ADM Milling Quality Laboratory in Overland Park. ADM and the Kansas Wheat Commission sponsor the Quality Initiative.