



Hard Winter Wheat Tour Summary by Ben Handcock

2013 Wheat Quality Council Hard Winter Tour Completed

Twenty cars with 74 crop scouts surveyed and evaluated the potential of the Kansas wheat crop the week of April 29-May 2, 2013. The total number of field stops was 570 compared to 608 one year ago. This year the weather was sort of ok for two days and terrible the last day.

The participants attended a brief training and tour overview session in Manhattan on the evening of April 29 before enjoying a great steak fry. The dinner was held at the Rambler's Steak House in Manhattan.

Day one saw the 20 cars traveling on six different routes from Manhattan to Colby. ([See tour map](#)). The wheat seemed consistently good on most routes in the Central portion of the state, and the Nebraska route found good wheat in the south Central. As the routes moved farther west, the drought and freeze damage became very evident. Yields for the day ranged from 0-81 bushels per acre with the day one average on all routes at 43.8 bushels. This compares with 53.4 bushels one year ago. We stopped in 277 fields on day one. A group scouted eastern Colorado and reported a yield average of 34 bushels and estimated a total production of 59.8 million bushels for 2013.

Day Two the cars traveled from Colby to Wichita. Several cars went into the far western Kansas counties and three cars actually covered the northern tier of Oklahoma counties. The western Kansas area was reported as being still very dry, with freeze damage apparent in most places. The cars in Oklahoma found similar yields in very dry fields in the west but improvement as they moved east. The day two average was 37.1 bushels per acre compared to 43.7 in 2012. We had a range from 0-76 bushels and made 264 stops. Oklahoma reported an estimated 25.45 bushels per acre and a total production of 85.6 million bushels. This compares with 154.8 million bushels last year.

Day Three concluded the trip with the cars traveling from Wichita to Kansas City. We lost some cars and a few people in Wichita and made 29 stops on a shortened day. Rain and SNOW was falling throughout the day. This smaller production area does not have a significant impact on the state-wide average, but is usually a high yielding area. Yields ranged from 28-81 bushels with the day three average at 52.3 compared to 57.5 last year. Moisture seemed to be better across this area of the state.

The Calculated Average for the entire tour was **41.1** bushels per acre compared to 49.1 bushels on the same routes in 2012. The scouts use a formula provided by KS Ag Statistics to arrive at their calculated average. The formula is based on a 10-year rolling average and changes slightly from year to year.

The Estimated Production for the Kansas crop by **49** participants who joined the pool this year is **313.1** million bushels. These people base their estimates on yield estimates and acres expected to be harvested. There are always a number of abandoned acres and they attempt to factor that into the equation. KS Ag Statistics will release their official estimate of the crop tomorrow. Watch for it and see if we are reasonable close.

My personal observations, for what they're worth, are as follows:

Western parts of the state are still seriously short of moisture. I arrived in Kansas expecting to see the drought effects and the freeze damage, and that's what I saw. As the tour progressed, I became more convinced that the crop would be lower than average. I believe our 41.1 bushel average will be a bit too high. The 10-year average for Kansas is around 350 million bushels. Our estimators, at 313.1 are below that number, and I believe even that number is too high. I suspect that a lot of the wheat that is 6" or less tall will not make a crop unless it really rains and stays cool. I think there is a lot more downside potential to this crop than upside. Fields that were calculating in the teens will likely not be near that good.

The producers in the western part of the state would undoubtedly destroy this crop and plant something else, but there is not enough moisture to germinate a new crop. They are also afraid to tear this poor crop up because of the fear of wind erosion.

Please keep in mind that this whole tour is a snapshot in time regarding the potential of this crop. Thirty-four of our 74 participants were first-timers. They reported learning a lot about wheat while having a good time doing it. The value of this exercise is the people you meet and the friends you make and keep in contact with over the years to come. Although I think we did a good job of estimating the crop potential that really takes a back seat to the real value of the tour. This was truly a very diverse group of very nice people.

Thanks to all who sent employees, provided cars and helped in many ways to make this tour a success. I look forward to your support on our 57th annual Wheat Quality Council Hard Winter Wheat Tour.

Please share this information with others in your organization that may not be on our email list!!!

Remember our Hard Spring and Durum tour coming up on July 22-25. This tour covers North Dakota plus parts of Minnesota and South Dakota. A few brave souls might venture near the Montana border to look for a few more Durum fields to report on. The format is very similar to the winter tour, and registration forms are available on our web site at www.wheatqualitycouncil.org.

