

# 2017 Hard Winter Wheat Tour May 1-4

## TRIP SUMMARY

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We registered over 70 people for this year's tour. In addition to our core group representing the entire wheat industry, we continue to draw participation from around the world. This year we had grain traders and analysts from Brazil, Canada, Switzerland, Australia and Singapore. We ran 19 cars across the six routes we have followed for many years. We started and ended in Manhattan, KS with overnight stops in Colby and Wichita. In addition to covering Kansas, we had scouts and got reports from Nebraska, Colorado and Oklahoma. We used yield formulas provided by USDA/NASS and always have some expertise in each car to train the new attendees. Every car gives a detailed report each evening on their findings compared to previous years. We scramble the car assignments so attendees can meet as many people as possible, along with eating together each night. We are joined each night by local wheat producers, agronomists and grain handlers that offer local insight to our group. In addition to reporting daily yield statistics, each attendee is encouraged to predict the final crop size for Kansas. We take an average of those guesses and report it to the trade. Most of us will remember this year as "The year of the Blizzard". Saturday and Sunday prior to our arrival, the western third of Kansas received 7-22 inches of snow, along with 50 mile an hour wind gusts, just as the crop was beginning its grain filling stages. As I went to bed that Sunday, packed for leaving to Manhattan, we were alerted that Colby, Kansas(our Tuesday lodging), was still without power, along with most other small western towns. By the time we got to western Kansas Tuesday, we began to see the devastation. Miles and miles of power lines and the poles that hold them were destroyed. Crews from around the country were repairing as fast as possible. Remember, these lines are not along paved roads with easy access. The equipment was off road. Since all the region was saturated with moisture as the snow was melting, bulldozers were used to push the repair trucks in and out of the mud. The wheat fields were a mess. Snow was melting quickly, but most of the fields were still covered. The fields in the snow belt were flattened and tangled. None of us had seen this before. I would describe this as a combination of lodging with hail damage. Most of the fields were flat and were suffering from bent or kinked stems to various degrees. The biggest disappointment for us was not being able to quantify the damage. 1. It was so muddy that it was difficult to get in the fields, even with boots. Every car that ventured off the paved roads got stuck. 2. Most of the wheat was still snow packed. 3. It was impossible to measure the fields for a yield calculation. 4. It was too early to even confirm that the crop would or would not recover to some degree. We were advised that it would take perhaps two weeks before damage assessments could be confidently made. Our daily yield averages do not include these fields. Our reported daily yields appear high. I am more comfortable with our production estimate of 282 million bushels for Kansas. It looks like our group has individually decided that the crop is damaged, and either used large abandonment, or reduced yield in their estimates. There will be constant attention to crop conditions in Kansas for the next month.

Other negatives- Unusually heavy Wheat Streak Mosaic in the west. Onset of rusts. Since it is so muddy, and treatments need to be put on soon, I expect a lot of aerial applications soon.

Other positives – The soil is as wet and saturated as I have ever seen in my 38 years going out in Kansas. The crop is made, and more rain any time soon would likely to be detrimental. The crop is a week to 10

days early. That should make for temperatures better suited to grain filling. The central corridor of Kansas looks really good.

As in every year, we took a snapshot of the crop as best as we could. Environmental conditions over the next month will determine this crop. All of our route and data from this year's field observations are available on our website as well as information on our next tour in North Dakota.

This was my first year being in charge of the tour, so I don't know what's normal, but the media interest in our group was impressive to me. In addition to the many ag media that joined the tour, I probably spoke to 10-15 radio stations and print groups daily.

We had good feedback again from the participants. It's a great way to meet people, get exposure to Kansas agriculture, and receive crop training for yield and disease. I believe The Wheat Quality Council is bringing value to our industry, as evidenced by our attendance.

Respectfully submitted, Dave G Green Executive VP Wheat Quality Council

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