

December, 2007

Dear Sundre Growers -

Harvest is finally over in this part of the world and the results are in from most growers, so its time to let everybody know the results from 2007 and prepare for 2008. It seems there was some kind of major weather stress in almost all regions of Western Canada. A lot of areas had excess moisture in the spring followed by excessive heat and a few lucky ones, like myself, got to experience excess moisture again at harvest. Of these weather conditions, the excess water seemed to be the main crop killer.

A lot of areas also experienced hail, so even though I tried to spread the production of Sundre out as widely as possible, very few areas had ideal growing conditions and there will be a lot less seed for sale this spring than I'd hoped for. It appears there will be less than 100,000 bushels available for sale and demand for several times that amount.

While yields were down slightly to severely depending on where you were, most growers were very happy with Sundre's performance.

After my yield last year I was very disappointed with my 60 bu/acre average yield this year, until finding out the area average was 40 - 50 bu/acre. My next best barley did 40 bu/acre and my high yielding semi-dwarf averaged 25 bu/acre.

A grower west of Red Deer averaged 40 bu/acre with his Sundre and is expanding production next year as his other barleys averaged about 30 bu/acre.

It looks like the yield and quality award for Sundre this year goes to Dale Witdouck of Witdouck Farms at Iron Springs, Alberta. Their Sundre averaged 138 bu/acre with excellent quality. The first lot cleared out 15% and the clean sample weighed 57 lb/bu. Congratulations on your good fortune!

The resilience award goes to a field near Grassy Lake, Alberta, where it was seeded late, suffered severe heat stress, then a 70% hail storm and some other stresses I can't remember, but still yielded 90 bu/acre!

To the few growers I haven't talked to, if you have results that topped these examples, please let me know.

A more typical and possibly more reliable result comes from the Govan, Sask. area where they experienced almost normal extremes in their growing season. The Sundre averaged 70 bu/acre which was 15 bu/acre better than any other barley, including 2-rows and malts.

I have to be happy with how Sundre handled most conditions, especially compared to other varieties, so while I'm very disappointed with 2007's production totals, I'm still excited about Sundre's future, and I'm looking forward to seeing how it did in the Provincial Variety Trials and hoping it keeps its top yielding status.

I'm looking ahead to next year. There is a lot of work that can be done to ensure the success of this variety. The first thing to remind each grower about (not necessarily #1 in importance, but #1 in time urgency) is that, if you have a great looking top quality sample, please enter it in as many seed shows as possible.

Being a new variety it will be looked at and if it wins several awards it will be noticed. As I had stated in early promotional material, this kind of customer initiated interest is far better than advertising and hype-driven interest, and in the coming years when we have sufficient surplus supplies and start advertising more heavily, the ads will be far more effective if the buzz about the variety has already started with interested growers.

The deadline for the first major seed show, the Seager Wheeler, is this Thursday, November 29, 2007, so if anybody has a top sample (such as Dale) please get right on this and be sure to check for other upcoming seed shows. Check out the website at [www.cropproductiononline.com](http://www.cropproductiononline.com) for more information, or call Jackie at (306) 931-7886.

Just a little tip on preparing your sample: most shows only accept a machine cleaned sample, so don't be afraid to run the minimum lot amount through twice with a little heavier cut the second time. This is what most perennial winners do. A higher cut on a small lot of, say, 100 bushels is a lot easier to take than the whole lot and the sample usually looks a lot better. Also, be aware that in the past, the Seager Wheeler show was the only one that would allow you to hand prepare, (e.g hand pick) your sample. Please double-check the rules.

The second topic is undoubtedly the most important and that is the Protection of Sundre's Plant Breeder Rights (PBR), especially for the first few years.

Remember the biggest story behind Sundre isn't its top grain and forage yields, but its new and unique distribution system with lower levies and ultimately lower cost seed, with larger margins and hopefully increased use of pedigreed seed. It's very important that we promote and defend this aspect. It's a concept that every one of you bought into when you signed your contract and I'll be working very hard from a distributor's point of view to enforce this and support you whenever I can. A few simple steps taken by each grower such as

- 1) being careful who you sell to this first year
- 2) being careful on how you dump any screenings and - heaven forbid - any seed lots.

3) ensuring only contracted growers buy stock seed. (This is very simple to do, by checking the list of contracted growers on my website, [www.mastinseeds.com](http://www.mastinseeds.com), but an oversight could carry huge liabilities).

At this point I'd strongly encourage you to check out my website, as I've been updating it regularly over the summer and fall. Please browse through it, as it should be the one and only source you need for Sundre information. As I've had a lot of questions about fees, which were clearly spelled out in the contract, you may want to look up the contract, as well as more detailed information on defending Sundre PBR listed under Grower Expectations.

As a website is always a work in progress, I welcome all suggestions on possible improvements.

Before I leave the topic of PBR protection, I'd like to draw your attention to the PRB declaration form at the end of this email. Several growers have asked for this and here it is. What do you think about using this to defend Sundre's PBR and keep seed sales within the pedigreed chain, which will ultimately both determine the success of this new distribution system and create more profit for you?

I'd like your feedback before I get several hundred books of these made up!!

Finally, in the last week, the most common questions have been about pricing. For SeCan members, please access their website, [www.secan.com](http://www.secan.com) and use their cost calculator (on the right hand side of the home page, about 3/4 way down, login to view the Members Only section) to get an idea of where SeCan thinks prices should be. It's quite good, and uses business based parameters to determine a price. I encourage you to do this at least once, if for nothing else than to realize how under valued seed has been and continues to be. If farming were a business, we should be getting \$8.00 to \$9.00 per bushel. The whispers in the real world would seem to be centering around \$7.00 to \$7.25 for feed varieties in South Central Alberta.

Please stay in touch, may you winter well and best of luck for 2008.

Yours truly,

Bob Mastin