

Central Alberta LIFE Thursday, Aug. 9, 2007

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# AGRI-BUSINESS

## Sundre producer pitches new barley

*Mastin Seeds Ltd. won bidding war*

By LIFE staff

A Sundre-area seed grower has made the jump to distributor, and his first product looks like a winner.

Bob Mastin, who operates Mastin Seeds Ltd., has the distribution rights to Sundre barley.

He obtained these from the Lacombe Crop Development Centre, which recently developed the variety.

"It's the best barley ever developed out of Lacombe," boasts Mastin.

"Nothing out-yields it."

Mastin first spotted the barley — then called BT566 — four years ago during a field day at the Lacombe centre. It was the best he'd ever seen, but when the time came for seed companies to bid for distribution rights there were no takers — the probable consequence of the BSE crisis, poor growing conditions and low feed grain prices.

Mastin decided to make his own pitch for the barley, and despite a late

bid from a major seed company, the centre's review committee gave him the nod. He thinks they were impressed with his proposal to sell the new barley to farmers at a lower cost, to encourage greater sales over an extended period.

Naming rights fell to Mastin, who ultimately chose his hometown's name.

He's since established a network of contract growers across Western Canada and expects to finish this year with 400,000 bushels — propagated from the 60 bushels he started with.

"I'm thinking, in five years this should be the number 1 feed barley in Western Canada."

He's already had inquiries from as far away as the United States. Mastin also thinks his strategy of keeping prices low so pedigreed grains can compete with common seed in the long run is a winner.

"I would be able to go to any research station in Western Canada and basically put a competitive bid in against anybody," he predicts.

Mastin Seeds has already obtained the distribution rights to AC Mustang oats.