



Texas A&M AgriLife program to release two new wheat varieties

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Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the TAM Wheat Improvement Program have announced the pending release of two new wheat varieties, each with unique qualities, according to Dr. Jackie Rudd, AgriLife Research wheat breeder at Amarillo.

The announcement was made during the Rolling Plains Spring Field Day and Hardeman County Wheat Field Tour recently at Chillicothe.

"TAM 114 and TAM 204 each have unique characteristics and offer things to producers that we really haven't had before," Rudd said.

TAM 114, a hard red winter wheat developed from a cross between TAM 111 and an experimental breeding line, has excellent milling and baking quality, he said.

"It is one of the best bread-making wheats we've had in a long time," Rudd said. "It has a high test weight, so it is good for the milling side, and for the bakers it has extra strong gluten or dough strength – it makes a nice loaf of bread.

"Over the past 10 years, the milling and baking quality of Texas wheat varieties have been increasing and TAM 114 is another step up," he said.

For the producers, Rudd said TAM 114 offers resistance to leaf rust, stripe rust and stem rust. It is a high yielding wheat under both dryland and irrigated environments in the High Plains of Texas, but also does well in the Rolling Plains, the Blacklands and as far south as the Waco/Hillsboro area in the southern Blacklands.

TAM 204 is an awnless hard red winter wheat that was developed for grazing, but in addition to high forage yields it also has a great grain yield throughout Texas, he said.

The seed heads of most hard winter wheat varieties have awns or beards that are typically about an inch long, Rudd said. In awnless wheat varieties, the awns are very short or non-existent.

"Cattle grazing wheat after the seed heads have emerged are 'annoyed' by the bristly awns in their face and generally prefer awnless wheat," he said. "The awnless trait makes it a lot more valuable for those wanting to graze it out."

The parentage of TAM 204 includes the popular drought-tolerant TAM 112 and Jagger, which was

well known for excellent fall grazing, he said.

“TAM 204 also has one of the better insect resistance packages we’ve ever had: it’s resistant to greenbugs, Hessian fly and it also has wheat curl mite resistance. That wheat curl mite resistance is important, because the mite is the vector for wheat streak mosaic virus.”

He said because wheat planted for grazing often is planted early, greenbug and Hessian fly pressure increases, along with leaf rust and stripe rust sometimes, and “definitely early planted wheat is more vulnerable to the wheat streak mosaic virus.

“Having built-in resistance is a real good thing for the grazing wheat,” Rudd said, adding TAM 204 is resistant to stripe and stem rust, and has intermediate resistance to leaf rust.

“Also the acid soil tolerance and soil-borne mosaic virus resistance of TAM 204 allow it to be grown in areas of North Texas and South Central Oklahoma where these production constraints exist.”

Steve Brown, Texas Foundation Seed Service manager in Vernon, said the two varieties have been submitted to the State Seed Plant Board, an appointed board that oversees the seed certification program in Texas. This board will meet in mid-June to review the varieties. “Once these are accepted into the program, the licensing process will be started for both varieties,” Brown said.

He emphasized how important the TAM 204 grain-yielding capabilities were, saying many producers in the Rolling Plains graze Weathermaster 135.

“It’s kind of an old standard, and the yield differential is as much as 20 bushels per acre,” Brown said.

Both varieties are being grown in the first Foundation seed increase this year and they are looking very good in the field, he said. Foundation seed is the first step in the commercial process to produce the Certified seed that is sold to growers.

“This step is designed to assure seed purity and variety integrity during the commercial life of the variety,” he said.

“We will start the licensing process as soon as we get seed in the bin,” Brown said. “There has been a fair amount of interest in these varieties, and once they are licensed, we will tell where they will be available. But I would not expect to see any certified seed available until next year.”

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