

Benefits found feeding hybrid fall rye to hogs

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How to grow fall hybrid rye: It's recommended that the KWS Bono variety, which is distributed by FP Genetics, is seeded between mid-August to mid-September over standing straw in a field with good drainage. It should be seeded at a rate of 18.5 plants per acre at a depth of three-quarters to one inch. Rows should be spaced seven to eight inches apart. Early fertilizer in the spring is recommended, though the hybrid variety requires 20 percent less nitrogen than similar wheat varieties. For harvest, straight cutting works best when using lower cylinder threshing speeds. Harvesting at slightly higher moisture levels can reduce harvest damage, though grain should be stored with moisture levels that are 13.5 percent or lower. | FP Genetics Photo

New Alberta Agriculture research shows the cereal can go a long way; it also beat wheat as a feed alternative for pigs

WAINWRIGHT, Alta. — Hog farmers should consider feeding their animals hybrid rye as an alternative to wheat, according to new research.

The research, led by Alberta Agriculture, found that more animals could be fed on an acre of hybrid fall rye compared to an acre of wheat.

For instance, researchers found that if rye yields were 100 bushels per acre and wheat was 60 bu. per acre, 16 hogs could be fed on an acre of rye while only 10 could be fed on an acre of wheat. Rations would have to be 60 percent grain in this scenario.

In more conservative estimates, they determined that if rye yielded 90 bu. per acre and wheat 70 bu. per acre, 15 hogs could be fed on an acre of rye compared to 12 pigs on an acre of wheat.

The findings suggest hybrid rye can completely replace wheat for feeder diets without affecting feed efficiency, costs or weight gain, said Eduardo Beltranena, a feed research scientist with Alberta Agriculture.

“If you’re growing hybrid rye and getting more bushels per acre, you’re going to be able to get more pork per unit of land,” he said, following a meeting in Wainwright.

Researchers conducted the study from January to April of this year, feeding slightly more than 1,000 pigs in 48 pens at the Drumloche Research Barn in Lougheed, Alta. The pigs were separated by gender.

They used the Bono rye variety, developed by German company KWS Lochow, to feed the pigs three different diets. One group received 20 percent rye and 40 percent wheat, another 40 percent rye and 20 percent wheat and the third 60 percent rye and no wheat.

The rest of the diet was made up of peas, canola oil, enzymes and other minerals. As rye rations increased, more canola oil was added to ensure each pig group was getting the same amount of energy.

The wheat they used was a soft variety that had 10 to 11 percent protein. It was grown in the Irma, Alta., area.

While outcomes from the three diets hardly varied, researchers determined pigs on the all-rye diet digested the feed more slowly, which gave the enzymes more time to help with feed efficiency and weight gain. Even though rye can completely replace wheat, Beltranena said it would be up to farmers, based on the economic makeup of their farms, to determine how much they would like to supplement.

However, he said introducing a rye diet would likely work best for producers who are farming both pigs and grain, because they won’t have to deal with marketing the crop to a limited number of buyers.

“Those integrated farming systems will be seeing benefits sooner,” he said.

Rye has become an attractive alternative for feed partly because newer hybrid varieties yield more. They also have better protection against ergot, a major fungus that can cause lameness and significantly reduce lactation.

In Germany, for example, 59 percent of pig farmers use rye for feed and 84 percent of producers in Denmark use it for that purpose, said Claus Hinrich Heuer, a product manager with KWS, during his presentation at the meeting.

Heuer also pointed to other research projects in Europe that suggested salmonella risks were reduced by 35 percent when feeding rye, and that pigs stay calmer for a longer period because the grain digests slowly.

Canada primarily grows rye for distilling and food production purposes, but Heuer said there is potential for it to expand into the feed market.

“The hybrid varieties require less energy, less pesticides and has a higher survival rate and yield, which makes it an attractive crop,” he said.