

Mustang roams prairies again

By Michael Raine
Saskatoon newsroom

EDMONTON — Mustang came charging back this month.

The 13-year-old oat variety that was dropped by Agricore United has found a new home and a new life as a seed show winner and popular forage and grain oat.

Picked up by Mastin Seeds of Sundre, Alta., the oat won grand aggregate cereal and top oat awards at the Northlands Pedigreed Seed Show in Edmonton earlier this month and top oat at the Olds College Seed Fair and Hay Show in Olds, Alta.

“We were lucky to get Mustang,” Bob Mastin said. “Oats were at a low price, along with other feeds, the last few years and I guess Agricore decided they no longer needed it or didn’t want to market the variety.”

He said Mustang is a dual purpose variety with 107 percent of the Calibre yield and 122 percent of AC Assiniboia.

“It’s taller than Assiniboia as well. Early enough to be both a seed and a forage oat but late enough for good seed yields. It was also well timed for our planting as a silage crop with our Sundre barley. So it was good fit for our products.”

Mastin said the variety has been in demand since he reintroduced it to seed growers this winter.

Mustang came from Agriculture Canada’s breeding programs at Lacombe, Alta., and delivers a relatively heavy test weight, similar to Dumont.

“I’ve got a lot calls from the Peace River district (of northern British Columbia and Alberta), but seed growers from Manitoba and across Saskatchewan are asking for it again this spring too.”

In Alberta’s regional variety trials Mustang was the highest yielding oat from 2003 through 2006, with a maturity of one day over the 103.5 maturity of the standard Cascade.

Mustang performs particularly

well on the northern Prairies, scoring an average bushel weight of 42 pounds and 85 centimetre height in Peace River regional trials.

Mastin said an expected late spring in the Peace River district and higher feed prices should put Mustang seed sales into a steady gallop this season.

The crop is susceptible to crown and stem rust and has moderate resistance to smut and medium resistance to lodging.

“This was just a variety looking for a home and I happened to have one,” Mastin said.

Like Sundre barley, Mastin is keeping the seed premiums low on the variety, with a three percent flat charge for every bushel sold to commercial growers.

“It’s a concept that should keep brown bagging to a minimum,” he said. “If we as seed growers can offer commercial producers higher quality seed at a small premium we should get higher volumes of sales that make up for lost higher premiums in the short term. Over the long haul that encourages commercial growers to buy their seed from certified sources.”

Mastin said that should translate into higher yields for commercial producers and good long-term markets for seed growers.

“This old horse still has a few tricks in it.”



Bob Mastin says Mustang oats performs well on the northern Prairies. (Photo courtesy of Bob Mastin)