

1320 Research Park Drive  
Manhattan, Kansas 66502  
(785) 564-6700



900 SW Jackson, Room 456  
Topeka, Kansas 66612  
(785) 296-3556

Jackie McClaskey, Secretary

Governor Sam Brownback

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**For more information:**

Beth Gaines  
(785) 207-4966  
MEDIA@kda.ks.gov

## **Kansas continues to address presence of wheat disease**

Manhattan, Kansas – Kansas weather conditions have been ideal this year for the development of wheat disease. Stripe rust is a common wheat disease being managed through the middle of the United States from Texas to North Dakota. It has been widely observed in Kansas wheat fields. Also detected this year, for the first time in Kansas since the 1930s, is flag smut.

In May 2015, wheat flag smut (*Urocystis tritici*) was initially detected in Rooks County during regular and on-going disease survey work and confirmed by laboratory result. After initial positive results were identified and wheat industry leaders consulted, KDA developed and implemented a response plan. A total of 549 plots were surveyed in Central and Western Kansas by KDA, K-State and USDA APHIS. Survey locations included production fields, variety plots and experimental research plots. There were 39 positive detections. In nearly every positive case the surveyors reported the level of infestation to be 0.1 percent or less.

“We are currently working to identify and contact affected landowners,” said Jeff Vogel, KDA Plant Protection and Weed Control program manager. “While there has been a low incidence of the disease detected in the surveys, we know that it is going to be difficult to prevent contaminated grain from entering into the export market. The disease characteristics make the goal of preventing this grain from entering export channels difficult to achieve. The steps we are asking our farmers to take will help reduce the risk of infected grain entering the export market.”

KDA is contacting farmers with fields found to contain flag smut and providing them with recommended best management practices for mitigation. The recommendations include the following: delaying the harvest of infested fields until uninfested fields are harvested; cleaning harvesting and transportation equipment; treating wheat that will be used as seed for planting; opting for cropping rotations that are not continuous wheat; and delivering wheat from infested fields to country elevators for non-export uses, such as domestic milling and animal feed, avoiding terminal elevators or unit training loading facilities. It is recognized that some fields may have already been harvested and thus all mitigation strategies may not apply.

Because of the initial detection late in the growing season, and the time necessary to complete the additional disease surveys, farmers are being contacted in the middle of wheat harvest, alerting them to the presence of flag smut in their fields. The outreach effort is geared toward keeping the very low presence of flag smut

from becoming higher in the future. Flag smut presents no human or animal health concern and has no impact on grain quality.

KDA's mission is to serve farmers and protect plant health in order to help ensure the continued strong contribution of agriculture to the state's economy. KDA is partnering with industry to form a working group to help reduce the future impact of this seed and soil-borne disease and develop a plan of action to address flag smut mitigation practices moving forward in the 2016 crop year and beyond. Industry stakeholders invited to participate include farmers and private industry along with the following organizations: Kansas Wheat Commission, Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, Kansas Wheat Alliance, Kansas Grain and Feed Association, Kansas Farm Bureau, Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Crop Improvement Association, Kansas Seed Industry Association, K-State Plant Pathology and K-State Extension.

For additional information on wheat diseases in Kansas, check [www.agriculture.ks.gov/ppws](http://www.agriculture.ks.gov/ppws), <http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/wheatpage/>