

Plain View

Cooperation—What comes naturally



At left: Gary Strickland and Bob Howard look over demonstration plots for wheat varieties. We chose Bob Howard as our grower of the month due to his innovative nature and his

By Diane Varner, Update Editor, and Gary Strickland, Jackson County Extension

Bob Howard runs a cattle-wheat operation in southwestern

wheat, such as Cutter, Endurance, and 2174. He uses Jagger, Jagalene, and 2174 but has thought about dropping 2174 and Jagalene. He would like to use Cutter, an AgriPro variety, and Endurance, a variety created by OSU.

Oklahoma, about nine miles east of Altus, OK. His house is nestled into pasture at the foot of the Wichita and Headrick mountains.

His family has been farming and ranching in the area since the 1880s. He grew up there and raised his children there. He gained his bachelor's in Animal Science and Agricultural Education in 1969. When he finished his tour of duty in Vietnam with the U.S. Army in 1970, he returned to the area. He worked on his master's at OSU for about a year, and taught agriculture in Blair, OK., while farming at the same time. It was also during this time that Bob met his wife, Renee.

At one time or another, Renee, his two sons, Brent and Ryan, and his daughter, Chrystle, have helped with the farm's operations. After graduating from Oklahoma State, all three plan to pursue, are pursuing, or have obtained a law degree, two from the "other school," the University of Oklahoma and one from Oklahoma City University. For the past few years, Bob's father, Sam, has continued to help Bob by plowing his wheat stubble.

In addition to farming and ranching his 2,500 acres, Bob has served as a county commissioner and a volunteer firefighter. He has also worked with organizations like 4-H and FFA. He said these organizations help kids build leadership skills, and it affords kids the opportunity to get involved with agriculture.

His spirit of cooperation and leadership are displayed in his work with extension educators. County extension agent Gary Strickland gave Bob a lot of credit for raising awareness about new technologies among producers in the area. His participation can be seen in his front yard. Laid in rows across the front of his yard grow different varieties of

His innovation can be seen elsewhere. He uses the new nitrogen rich strips, associated with the greenseeker technology at OSU. He chose to try the strips to improve his nitrogen use efficiency since the sandy soils are losing excess nitrogen. Strickland has a nitrogen sensor unit, so he can go out and take readings.

"He's one of our more innovative producers," Strickland said. "He's always looking for the best technology that will help his production system increase."

He has tried no-till, but preferred to use reduced tillage. He said he tries to limit the number of trips to three to five. He uses reduced tillage to get as much moisture in the soil. He also uses liquid fertilizer. Last summer he applied liquid fertilizer on top of the straw, rather than top dressing. He's also thinking about including round-up with the fertilizer.

"I like to see the stubble lying on the ground or incorporated into the top soil," he said. "Rainfall is the biggest challenge. That's why I don't want to see one drop of rain run off my place. I like for it to go down instead of off."

Greenbugs have been present, but he said a lot of greenbugs must be present before he sprays. He's hands-on with his farming. He's proud of his family, and he loves running cattle and farming. He said he has all he can handle after taking 30 years to build his operation.

For more information about Bob and his operation, please visit our Web site.



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We are *Areawide Pest Management for Wheat*, a five-year project developed by the *USDA Agricultural Research Service*, to demonstrate pest management practices for the *Russian wheat aphid* and *greenbug*. Our main goal is to collaborate with wheat producers in evaluating and demonstrating non-chemical pest management techniques, with particular emphasis on the management of the *Russian wheat aphid* and the *greenbug*. The elements of our program include:

- *Crop Diversification*
 - *Variety Selection*
 - *Field Monitoring and biocontrol*
 - *Best Management practices for Wheat*

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One reason for using reduced tillage rather than no-till is moisture. Running cattle packs down the soil; it makes it difficult for the water to soak into the soil. Bob said he will monitor his wheat closely; he uses *Glance N' Go* to determine the economic threshold. Close observation gives him the opportunity to root out problems before they get out of control. For instance, he has had problems with pests like the *Army cutworm* and weeds. Despite these problems, Bob said he's happy with what he has built. "A farmer's a guy who gets up and does his chores. Then he does the plowing and then the planting. The whole gamut," he said. "That's what I love to do."



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Areawide Pest Management for Wheat
Management of Russian wheat aphids and greenbugs
USDA *ARS* USDA Agricultural Research Service
1301 N. Western Road
Stillwater, OK 74075

Update Editor & Webmaster: Diane Varner

For comments about this update or our program, please contact Dr.

Norm Elliott at 405-624-4141, ext 227, or Norman.Elliott@ars.usda.gov