



# Plain View



*Management of Russian wheat aphid and greenbugs*

## **Cass Farms: Dedicated to Progress through Agricultural Research**

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(Above) Stan Cass and his wife, Cecily. This month we chose Stan as our Grower of the Month. Stan and his family run a farm and a cow-calf operation in Briggsdale, Colorado.

Stan Cass is an AWPM cooperator and farms at Briggsdale, CO, 42 miles east of Ft. Collins. He lives in Eaton, CO with his wife, Cecily. His Cass Farms Company contains about 6,000 acres of crop land and pasture which supports crops, now primarily millet and triticale, and they also have a cow/calf operation. His son as partner helps with the farm full time. When his grandsons finish college, they will likely return to the farm to help.

In the early 40's, the town of Briggsdale was founded by Frank Briggs and Ed Laycock. Stan's dad bought the farm in 1943. At this time, irrigation was minimally used. However, the Cass farm has always been dryland. His father started farming with the wheat varieties Scout and Buckskin. There were great wheat yields in the 50's and 60's, averaging 40-50 bushels/acre.

Stan left the farm to attend the Military Academy at West Point. After graduating in 1957, he served two tours in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. He retired from the army as a colonel and returned to Briggsdale in 1986. There was never any doubt that Stan would return to the family farm.

Briggsdale has a challenging climate with an average of 11.7 inches of rain per year along with a high evapotranspiration rate. Thus, it is not surprising that there have been difficulties. In the 1930's, pinto beans were farmed. It was a big crop then, and it was subsequently the downfall of bean farming in northeastern Colorado. They found they needed crops that provided residue rather than beans. Most of the farmers turned to barley and wheat, and barley was later excluded due to infestations by the wheat aphid.

The next 30-40 years had mainly been a rotation of wheat-fallow, which was a rotation that was recommended by Colorado State University (CSU). When Stan returned to the farm in 1986, he decided to diversify the cropping systems, moving away from the conventional wheat-fallow rotation. CSU had recommended different ideas for farming with more economic profitability. At this time, most farmers in Briggsdale were planting a wheat-millet-fallow rotation. This way they were getting two crops every three years instead of one every other year.

Stan and other local farmers have lost money on wheat. He doesn't plant wheat anymore; now he will only plant fall and spring

forage crops. He thinks fall triticale has the potential to be a great fall forage crop. He and his son plant foxtail millet in the spring and have successfully intercropped sorghum with the millet. The sorghum seed helps to break the crust so the millet seed can emerge.

"Diversification is the name of the game," Stan said. For Stan, this involves their cow/calf operation. They can handle 200 cows when the conditions are good, but average around 140 cows with the last few years of drought.

Stan has extensively worked with CSU for the last 20 years and has always enjoyed working with them. There are 48 plots on a portion of his farm that are used for the AWPM project, an extensive CSU dryland agroecosystem study, and several graduate student projects. These plots have been in rotation since 1999, and, before this, the CSU wheat variety test plots were on Stan's farm. Some of the rotations in experimentation are wheat-fallow, wheat-millet-fallow, an experiment with a wheat-corn-corn-sunflower-fallow rotation, and a six-year crop rotation of Austrian winter peas, grain sorghum, soybeans, forage soybeans, sunflowers, corn and wheat. They also experimented with skip-row corn in 2005. These plots, along with the rest of Cass Farms, have moved to rotations that only include forage crops. His involvement in these studies has been instrumental to the progress of agricultural research at CSU.

*"Diversification is the name of the game," said Stan in reference to his operation*

In addition to farming, Stan is a dynamic force in his community. He was a board member and mayor of Ault, CO, for nine years. He is currently chairman of the Greeley/Weld County Community Foundation and also serves on their scholarship and Littler Youth Fund committees. He is a member of the Colorado Conservation and Tillage Association and serves on the West Greeley Conservation District Board. Recently, he is helping to educate the community on conservation easements and the preservation of farming communities through generations.

Stan is dedicated to farming, researching new techniques, and conserving the future of farm land. He will continue to be a driving strength for progress in Weld County, CO.



**Wheat, Peanut and Other Field Crops Research Unit**  
Stillwater, Oklahoma

*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

## **Using Biosolids to Enrich the Soil with Essential Nutrients**

Stan encourages the use of biosolids (treated municipal sludge) on farms. Before biosolids, he was one of the first farmers to use float, a bioresource, which is the runoff from the meat-packing plant. Float was later supplemented with paunch. However, he noticed that nitrogen application through these processes was not monitored, and Stan and the Conservation District Board wanted rules to be implemented. Because of their efforts, paunch is now prohibited around Briggsdale, but the application of biosolids is legal through monitoring. Local farms are soil tested to make sure they regulate the amount of nitrogen applied to their fields.



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## **Areawide Pest Management for Wheat**

Management of Russian wheat aphids and greenbugs

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