

North Dakota Winter Wheat Crop Hurt by Disease

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MINOT, N.D. (AP) — Some North Dakota grain elevators are urging farmers to bin their newly harvested winter wheat until the market figures out what to do with a heavily diseased crop.

The crop is showing high levels of vomitoxin — a toxin associated with scab disease that can make grain unsafe for people and animals to eat.

The CHS Garrison elevator has seen wheat with vomitoxin levels that are 10 times higher than what the U.S. Food and Drug Administration allows, Manager Chris Gratton told the [Minot Daily News](#) [1].

"There's very limited buyers for any grain that has vomitoxin in it at all, and we are at such high amounts it's almost to the point where it's a worthless commodity right now," he said.

Wet weather in late June and early July when winter wheat was flowering was favorable for the development of vomitoxin, according to North Dakota Wheat Commission Marketing Director Jim Peterson.

"Fungicide control is your best option, and even that is not 100 percent," he said. "With winter wheat, one of our challenges is we don't have a lot of built-in genetic resistance to (fungi) like we do with hard red spring wheat."

Elevators can blend affected wheat with non-diseased grain, but not during the rush of harvest. Farmers should wait to see what solutions become available down the road, Gratton said.

SunPrairie Grain in Minot won't take any winter wheat unless it has vomitoxin below a certain level, General Manager Brad Haugeberg said.

"It's between the crop insurance people and the marketplace to figure out what can be utilized and how it can be utilized," he said. "Even the crop insurance people are telling their customers to put it in the bin so they have some time to sort this out."

North Dakota farmers are expected to produce 24.6 million bushels of winter wheat this year. That is only about 3 percent of the U.S. crop. North Dakota's staple crop is spring wheat.

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