

WSARE Grain Case Study Feral Farm

Name of Farm: Feral Farm

Website: Feral Farm – Seeds from our Applegate, Oregon Farm

Point of Contact: Cacia Huff

About the farm: Feral Farm is dedicated exclusively to organic, open pollinated seed and heirloom garlic production. The farm consists of four fields along a four mile stretch of the Thompson Creek watershed in the Applegate valley of southern Oregon, where long dry summers and a county ban on GMOs favor healthy, clean seed production.



Owned and operated by Cacia Huff and with the help of neighbors along Thompson Creek.

Participated by: Feral Farm (Applegate, OR) is a four acre seed farm with sandy loam soils. Producer Cacia Huff is seeking to add heritage grains into her crop rotation.

-Each farmer in the project measured yield and noted lodging % for each of the four different grain crops (Tibetan Purple Barley, Ukrainka

Wheat, Banatka Wheat, Rouge de Bordeaux wheat).

Bed preparation: Producer Huff will till the trialing beds using a tractor. Beds will be seeded with an Earthway seeder and not mulched.

Goal of the project: growing four grains (Tibetan Purple Barley, Ukrainian Wheat, Banatka Wheat, Rouge de Bordeaux Wheat) in order to determine:

- largest yield
- least amount of lodging
- most amount of biomass
- which is best suited for home use or small-scale seed production (ease of harvesting and threshing)



Growing Heritage Grains: Feral Farm

Date	Activity	Notes
Nov 2023	Seeded 25 ft (4 rows per bed, 9 in apart)	Seeded heavy
Feb 18, 2023	All varieties are at least 4-6 inches tall	Emergence similar timing
April 24	All varieties are flowering	
June 17	Harvest begins with the barley	
July 25	All varieties mature - harvested Rouge de Bordeaux during farm tour	
July 30	Harvested Banatka and Ukrainka	

Notes: No significant pest pressure, biomass left standing in the field and estimates made about amounts before turning under in the fall.

Harvest Grains Observations:

Grain Variety	Harvest Amount	Harvest Observation
-Tibetan Purple Barley	3.5 lbs	50% lodging, challenge to thresh
-Ukrainka Wheat	4.9 lbs	No lodging
-Rouge De Bordeaux	5.1 lbs	5% lodging, easy to thresh
-Banatka Wheat	7.3 lbs	Very tall, lots of biomass

Summary: The Banatka wheat grew the tallest (5+ft tall) and the plants grew with up to 20 tillers each. This meant that the plants were tall, providing more yield, but also the number of tillers added to the substantial biomass from harvesting the Banatka wheat. It was by far the best producer with the largest amount of biomass.



The beds with no till preparation grew grains with more tillers than those beds that were tilled. Mulching was a supportive practice for all participating farmers except Feral Farm.

The primary difference was seen in the varieties where lodging was a problem which impacted the yield of the grain. Rouge De Bordeaux and Tibetan Barley had higher rates of lodging and the yields and the biomass were lower as well.

Collaborators wondered if the longer term impacts of tillage could be seen over time, but only minimal differences were seen in the two years of the project.



As a result of this project: Feral Farm plans to triple the amount of heritage grains that they are growing. Feral Farm also included the 4 heritage grain seed for sale on their website, thus increasing the diversity of the seed that their farm offers. **Feral farm said “this project has given me the confidence to try to grow more heritage grains. I am motivated to plant more because I have seen how feasible and beneficial it is for my farm.”**