

ROB DAVIS

Interview conducted in 2014 by former Pulse USA Western Sales Representative, Luke Dukart

BACKGROUND OF OPERATION

My name is Rob Davis and I am from the town of Larslan, MT. I was born into agriculture in Bozeman, MT on the family farm. I grew up farming and ranching in the Gallatin Valley until the late 90's. I attended MSU Northern in Havre, MT and received a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Operations Technology in 2003.

With Bozeman becoming a popular place to live, the urban areas were quickly taking over the countryside. By the early 2000's it was getting tougher to farm in the Bozeman area. With several local farm families selling out and relocating, we eventually followed suit. After working for a local Case IH dealership in Havre for a few years, my family purchased a farm in Larslan, where I moved and began farming in 2004.

When I began farming in Larslan, there were very few younger people headed back to the farm. This is when I realized that I needed to be in some sort of leadership position to help keep agriculture headed in the right direction. I was elected to the board of directors for the Montana Grain Growers Association (MGGA) shortly after. I sat on a planning committee for the Young Ag Leadership Conference that is held annually in Montana, which is focused on bringing new leaders into the Ag industry. After being elected for a second term on the board, I was encouraged to move on to the executive board, where I currently serve as Treasurer for MGGA.

Since the start of our new venture in Northeastern Montana, we have grown and expanded to keep up with the changing times in agriculture. Being raised around wheat and barley production only, the specialty crops grown in our area were a new thing to learn. After many meetings and seminars we now produce spring wheat, durum, malting barley, peas, chickpeas, flax, and canola. It has been fun to see all of the changes in just our operation alone, and I look forward to seeing what others have gone through to keep up with this changing industry we are involved in. I hope to continue in leadership roles to improve upon myself and others, and help keep this industry productive and progressive.

How have pulse crops impacted your cereal yields the next year?

Raising pulse crops have not only improved the yield potential of our cereals, but also the overall grain quality has improved with pulses in the rotation. I have had a solid 5-7 bushel increase in yields with good improvements in grain protein and test weight.

How do you best decide your crop rotation and what is your main rotation?

We rotate cereals (spring wheat, durum, and barley) with a pulse (peas and chickpeas) along with oilseeds (flax and canola). Generally, the rotation is a cereal followed by a pulse crop, followed by a different cereal, then an oilseed, and back to a cereal.

What is the biggest obstacle that you have had to overcome with growing pulse crops?

The biggest obstacle has been finding which practices work best in our own area. Between Pulse USA and the grower organization meetings, I have gained the knowledge and then had to fine tune the practices to fit our own environmental conditions.

How have you helped improve your soil health on your farm?

The fields are divided into management zones, and then each zone is soil tested for nutrients annually. All cereals and oilseeds are variable-rate fertilized according to zone tests. This has kept the soil nutrients at a maintained level. With the crop rotation on top of that, residue is managed with a low residue crop following a high residue crop. Our organic matter has been on a steady rise since we adopted this practice. Soil nutrient levels and overall health has improved greatly as well.

How have Limagrain Cereal Seeds wheat varieties impacted your farm?

We have been raising LCS spring wheat for three years now, and their varieties have been our top producing wheat varieties over those years. This past year our entire spring wheat crop consisted of LCS wheat varieties. Each new variety that LCS releases has shown an improvement in yield and quality.