



## NEWS RELEASE

- for immediate release

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### **Seed of the Year West Announces Winner**

*Seed of the Year West* is proud to announce that Fleet meadow brome grass has been selected as the 2011-12 winner. For 58 years, (until his passing in 1998) Dr. Bob Knowles bred new varieties of perennial grasses for western Canada at the Saskatoon Research Centre of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Many of the most popular dryland grass varieties in western Canada, including Fleet, came from his program. "Dr. Knowles' varieties produced high yields of high quality seed" said University of Saskatchewan's Bruce Coulman, manager of the joint AAFC-University of Saskatchewan grass breeding program. Coulman went on to say, "Dr. Knowles recognized that no matter how good a forage grass was, if a seed producer couldn't make money producing it, or a cattle producer couldn't afford to buy it, it would not be used."

Fleet was the first Canadian release of meadow brome grass and became the most widely distributed variety in North America. Fleet not only had higher forage yields than previous meadow bromes, it had higher seed yields and improved seed quality. For this reason it is still a leading variety in the marketplace, almost 25 years after its release in 1987. "I can think of no other forage variety that has had a more positive impact on pasture production in western Canada than Fleet," said Trent Whiting, Marketing Representative for SeCan and nominator of Fleet.

*Seed of the Year* is designed to provide recognition to publicly-developed varieties that have made a significant contribution to the economy, agriculture, and the Canadian public in general. Although the name, Seed of the Year, indicates the contribution in a particular year, the program is much broader reaching and considers total lifetime achievement and contribution. It is important to recognize the value of our public plant breeding programs, as well as encourage the entry of new plant breeders to the industry.

Part of the western award is a scholarship of \$4000, awarded to a student enrolled in a western Canadian university and currently completing a Masters or Ph.D. in plant breeding or genetics. Bruce Coulman will review and select the scholarship award winner on behalf of Dr. Knowles. "The Seed of the Year Scholarship will help ensure the development of young plant breeders who will release more excellent varieties like Fleet in the future," suggested Coulman.

Seed of the Year West would also like to acknowledge its sponsors: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Barley Commission, Canterra Seeds, Cargill, Canadian Wheat Board, Parrish & Heimbecker Limited, Canadian Seed Growers Association, Viterra, Richardson International, SeCan, and Western Grains Research Foundation. We also wish to thank the judges and other applicants.

For more information on Seed of the Year West, as well as application forms for next year, please visit [www.seedoftheyear.ca/west](http://www.seedoftheyear.ca/west) .

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