



Evaluating Winter Wheat Stands



Current issue

Recommended seeding rates start at 1.2 million seeds per acre and increase as planting is delayed through October in eastern Nebraska. You can download the seeding rate Excel tool at croptechcafe.org/winterwheat Evaluating your winter wheat stand and determining how many plants you have on a per acre basis is something most growers find difficult and time consuming. It is normal to use a tape measure to help count plants for corn and soybean, but not as ideal for wheat. Knowing what percentage of your seeding rate became established as plants is critical information to have to make future planting adjustments and also to make a determination, when stands are poor, to use the wheat as a cover crop.

Making your own grid for 1/10,000 of an acre

Supplies:

- One 10 ft piece of ½ inch PVC & Four PVC elbows for ½ inch pipe
- Measuring tape, saw, & permanent marker

Cut and Assemble: Dimensions to cut pipe for each row spacing:

- 7.5 inch row spacing
 - 22.5” wide and 28” long
- 8 inch row spacing
 - 24” wide and 26” long
- 10 inch row spacing
 - 30” wide and 21” long

Mark: With your permanent marker, add 3 lines (7.5, 8, or 10) inches apart to represent rows on each two sides (the side that is 22.5, 24, or 30” wide).

Assess your winter wheat stand

Count the number of plants for the three rows inside the grid in the fall or early spring with a **tally counter** (shown in picture) in several different areas of the field and then average those values. Interpretation of your counts from 1/10,000 of an acre grid:

- **Less than 50 plants** – Likely due to high variability in the stand, consider replanting at an angle or using as a cover crop
- **50 to 65 plants** – Reduced yield, can still yield well with good tillering and weed control
- **65 to 95 plants** – Good, can obtain close to max yield potential
- **More than 95 plants** – Ideal

For more information

Nathan Mueller, PhD, CCA

Nebraska Extension Cropping Systems Educator

402-727-2775 or nathan.mueller@unl.edu

Wheat resources for eastern Nebraska at croptechcafe.org/winterwheat