



“ KWS has such a great history in breeding when it comes to wheats. ”

Technical Insiders View

Awesome Dawsum

Making all the right noises for recommendation this autumn, there's a new hard feed wheat on the horizon that's set to shake up the Group 4 market. CPM reviews KWS Dawsum.

By Charlotte Cunningham

As seed breeding capabilities and technologies develop rapidly, bringing all sorts of brand-new whizzy traits, it's easy to overlook some of the good "all-rounder" types that still make up a large proportion of the market.

Though such types are often deemed as the less glamorous residents of the seed world, there's a new high-yielding Group 4 hard feed wheat that looks to be pretty d-awesome...

Introducing KWS Dawsum — KWS' latest candidate variety that's jam-packed with a whole host of promising qualities.

Spawning from a KWS Kerrin x Costello parentage, KWS Dawsum has inherited

high yields, good grain quality and a robust disease package to deliver a "unique" offering for growers looking to add a barn-filling hard feed wheat into their rotation, says Mark Dodds, wheat breeder at KWS. "The market has shifted recently and there's been a much greater demand for more resistant varieties.

"Kerrin is a particularly high yielding type and Costello has always been pretty clean, particularly on the yellow rust and mildew front, and we're pleased that Dawsum has inherited these qualities.

Safe variety

John Miles, KWS' product development manager agrees and says Dawsum excels in areas its parents were weaker. "I've always really liked Costello because, like JB Diego, it was an incredibly safe variety. That said, it was always a little behind on yield. Then we take Kerrin which was great in terms of yields, but a more of a 'dirtier' variety — particularly in terms of yellow rust — and we've been able to marry up all the best elements of each variety and deliver it in the form of a very good, dependable offering."

One of the standout attributes of KWS Dawsum is its specific weight (80.2kg/hl)

which although isn't always the first priority when selecting hard feed types could help growers take advantage of the current market outlook, adds Mark. "The high specific weight has been inherited from Costello and it has been a really popular characteristic of the variety. Adding hectolitre weight and Hagberg to a high yielding, robust variety means it's truly a fantastic option for growers.



The market has shifted recently and there's been a much greater demand for more resistant varieties, says Mark Dodds.



Millers often use hard Group 4s, so something that also offers a bit of quality will no doubt make it something of interest, says Kirsty Richards.

“Early indications suggest that the Hagberg is coupled with good sprouting resistance, again a big plus for many growers.”

Looking at how the marketplace has changed recently, prices for Group 4 wheats are much higher than usual, meaning KWS Dawsum could hit the market at just the right time, according to KWS’ knowledge transfer manager, Kirsty Richards. “For those

looking ahead, these barn-filling varieties may be of interest — pilling high and selling high is always an attractive proposition.”

Commenting on the variety’s specific weight, Kirsty also reckons that this could widen end-use opportunities for growers. “Millers often use hard Group 4s, so something that also offers a bit of quality will no doubt make it a variety of interest.”

Disease resistance

Turning focus to disease resistance and KWS Dawsum scores pretty solidly across the board with a rating of 8 for mildew, 8 for yellow rust, 7 for brown rust and a 6.3 for septoria. “We know that from other varieties coming through and the market demand that there’s an increasing focus on built-in septoria resistance at the moment,” explains John. “Since the loss of chloronathonil, there have been lots of conversations over how we’re going to fill that gap — whether that’s using folpet or taking a more strategic approach to variety selection. And while it’s not going to take the place of something like CTL, ultimately ▶

Rust ratings

Concerns over rust resistance have been aired recently, with quite a lot of lower brown rust resistance being seen in varieties, including from KWS, says John.

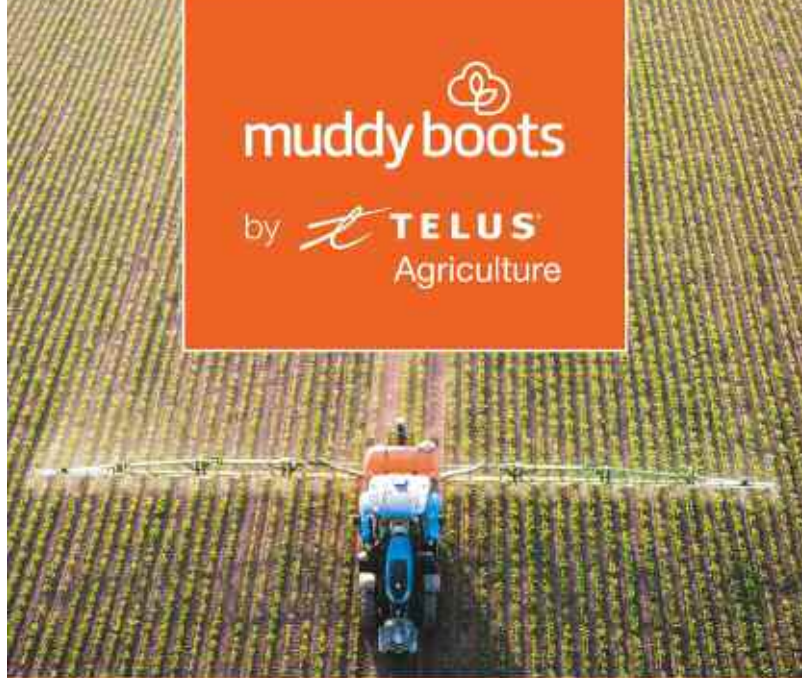
And while KWS Dawsum scores well for brown rust (7), what’s perhaps even more interesting is its yellow rust rating and just how robust it is. “If you look at the hard feed options and look at the yellow rust risk, then a lot of varieties on the market have medium-rust resistances, however, they are not resistant at the seedling stage, whereas based on our observations, Dawsum is.

“The issue is that there’s not a clear cut-off when it comes to seedling/adult plant susceptibility

— meaning we don’t know exactly when plants go from being a juvenile to an adult and therefore gaining this resistance.

“The importance of this is that RL ratings are based on adult plant resistance, however, the seedling resistance is really quite important because it does spend a lot of the growing season in this stage — all of the winter, all of the early spring and in some cases, all the way up to somewhere between the T1 and T2 spray timings.

“Because we don’t really know where this resistance switches on and off, having resistance at both of these stages gives you a much better opportunity to manage yellow rust issues.”



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varieties, like Graham and Costello, that don't benefit from OWBM but have still been very popular and successful."

So that's the stats on paper, but how does KWS Dawsum perform in the field? "In terms of location, we haven't identified any areas where it should be avoided. But its performance in the West and North underlines Dawsum's strong disease resistance," notes John.

Trials have shown that KWS Dawsum performs well in both the early and late drilling slots, says John Miles.

▶ varietal resistance is going to be a really integral part of that disease control strategy."

In an ideal world, John says they would have liked to have seen orange wheat blossom midge resistance inherited from KWS Kerrin, however, its absence shouldn't deter growers. "There's plenty of

Sowing flexibility

From a practical point of view, KWS Dawsum's sowing flexibility will no doubt also be attractive to growers, he adds. "In our trials, we've seen that Dawsum performs very well in the earlier slot — perfect for those not wanting to chance the weather or those wanting to spread their workload — but equally well in the later window too.

"It's unusual to have something that performs so well

over such a big timeframe, and as growers become more beholden to the unpredictable weather patterns as seen over the past few seasons, perhaps having something that can fit anywhere and still deliver will be advantageous."

The variety is up for recommendation this autumn, but the team at KWS say everything so far is pointing in

the right direction and there will be a small amount of seed available later in the year.

Chris Piggott — regional seed manager at Frontier — says KWS Dawsum caught his eye right from the very early stages. "The seed trade tends to get an early look at candidate varieties, and really this is an opportunity to pick out the ones that show some outstanding features, even

High hopes in Lincs

Ahead of its hopeful recommendation this year, Lincs grower David Hoyles has some KWS Dawsum in the ground this season on a seed contract. "We grow seed for KWS and in doing so, we get a heads up on some of the new varieties coming through.

"When they showed us the profile of Dawsum it looked particularly appealing for our soil type."

With very fertile ground, and therefore the ability to grow a thick crop, high yield and disease resistance are priority traits, adds David. "When it comes to Group 4's, we're looking for the high yielding barn-filling types and something that has good, inbred disease resistance which KWS Dawsum does."

The crop was put into the

ground on 25 Oct under poorer conditions, which meant the seed rate was upped to 350 seeds/m², he says. "Sometimes we just subsoil and combi drill, but because of the conditions, we had to plough beforehand."

Emergence was around 11 Nov, following a starter fertiliser injection at drilling, and the crop also had a BYDV protectant spray at the end of Nov.

While David's crops in general were looking pretty well pre-Christmas, the recent rainfall, snow and frost has put a slight dampener on progress. "We'll try and rectify this by getting on some good nutrition as soon as things dry out, but after seeing Dawsum in trials last year, we're pretty confident that it will still do well, so we look forward to seeing the final results at harvest."

Lincs grower, David Hoyles, has some KWS Dawsum in the ground this year on a seed contract.



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Toby Reich is hoping for long-term consistency from KWS Dawsum.

though they're only in the first stage of testing and trials.

"When it comes to feed wheats, I'm looking for a good balance of features. In the case of KWS Dawsum, having a high yellow rust score teamed with such an impressive yield potential is incredibly rare, so I have to say this stood out for me immediately."

As well as this, KWS Dawsum's flexibility is also an attractive quality, adds Chris. "After some of the autumns we've had, having as wide a sowing window as possible is going to be increasingly important for growers."

Echoing the sentiment that

specific weight isn't usually important from a feed wheat perspective, it's clearly valued on farm and so this is another attribute in KWS Dawsum's favour, he says.

In Frontier's own trials, KWS Dawsum's flexibility has proved to extend to its location suitability, with no obvious areas to be avoided and also had the highest out-and-out yield of anything last year, adds Chris.

Particular attention

Though official data is limited while KWS Dawsum continues to go through trials, Chris says he'll be paying particular attention to second wheat data as it comes through. "Being a new variety, we haven't seen much data yet, but I'm especially interested in seeing how Dawsum performs as a second wheat. Wheats that perform well as seconds are becoming increasingly important for us."

Looking at how Dawsum may fare on the market, Chris says there's still a lot of domestic demand for feed wheat. "On top of this, the specific weight will no doubt show its benefits in poor weather seasons.

"In terms of what I'd compare it to, Gleam is a fantastic variety and very well received and I think Dawsum is going to be similar but with the benefits of better yield, yellow rust resistance and quality."

To rival some of the other Group 4 options, Wynnstay's Toby Reich is looking for long-term consistency from KWS Dawsum. "Varieties such as Graham and Gleam have been particularly big sellers for us and our customers say that's due to their consistency, so that's what we're looking for from Dawsum."

But having seen it in trials last year, Toby says KWS Dawsum certainly delivers on a number of key traits. "Coming from a background in breeding, I'm really interested in the parentage of the variety, and you can certainly see the Costello pedigree in the quality of Dawsum.

"Looking particularly at the West, there's a strong following for Costello, with growers wanting something they can drill early but with that quality, so it's really exciting to see something like Dawsum coming through that also has that extra yield. For farmers, I think this will be an easy-choice variety."

Toby also likes the flexibility of KWS Dawsum, in terms of its sowing date, and says this is likely to draw in some of the market. "There's evidence to show it does well in both the earlier and later slots, meaning growers without significant grassweed pressure can get it in the ground earlier and likewise, if we experience the same haphazard autumns as recently seen, it can still be drilled later — without the risk of reduced performance."

He reckons that all being well, KWS Dawsum will find itself on the AHDB Recommended List this year. "There are no obvious



Chris Piggott is particularly interested in seeing how KWS Dawsum performs as a second wheat.

weaknesses, it has a cracking specific weight and brilliant yields, alongside a wide drilling window.

"KWS has such a great history in breeding when it comes to wheats, so I'm looking forward to seeing this one grow." ■

KWS Dawsum at a glance

Yield (% treated controls)	
UK treated	105
UK untreated	88
Disease	
Mildew	8
Yellow rust	8
Brown rust	7
Septoria	6.3
Agronomy	
Lodging (% +PGR)	2
Lodging (% -PGR)	2
Height (cm)	83
Ripening days (+/- Skyfall)	+1
Specific weight (kg/hl)	80.2
Protein content (%)	11.2
Hagberg falling number	303

[Source: AHDB Recommended List, candidate winter wheats 2021/22]

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