

# Building on a proven pedigree



*"I genuinely think it'll be one of our top five varieties this year."*

RICHARD MEECHAM

Following a successful reign for KWS Extase, the variety has now spawned a daughter that has already made a mark on the Recommended List... *CPM* reveals more about KWS Equipe.

By Charlotte Cunningham

**S**pawning from French origins, 'equipe' translates simply into English as 'team', and fresh out of KWS' breeding programme in France, there's a new player looking to be a promising addition to the Group 2 line up...

Enter KWS Equipe, one of the breeder's most recently recommended varieties with a parentage grounded in two of Europe's most successful wheats and a performance package that's turning heads in trial plots and commercial fields alike.

Promising the highest untreated yield on the Recommended List,

robust disease resistance, and solid grain quality, Equipe is being pitched as a natural successor to Extase – but with broader agronomic flexibility and a reassuring level of resilience for an increasingly unpredictable growing landscape.

## PROVEN TRACK-RECORD

Looking at its journey to market, KWS' Mark Dodds explains that Equipe's story started several years ago in northern France, bred by KWS Momont, the same team responsible for developing Extase.

"Equipe is a direct cross between



## The next generation Extase

Equipe is a direct cross between Extase and Chevignon – two very successful, widely grown varieties across Europe, explains KWS' Mark Dodds.

## KWS EQUIPE AT A GLANCE

Yield (%) treated controls	
UK treated	103
UK untreated	92
East	102
West	105
North	[100]
Grain quality	
Specific weight	79.5
Protein content	[12.2] (milling spec)
Hagberg Falling Number	305
Agronomics	
Resistance to lodging without PGR	7
Straw height without PGR (cm)	94
Ripening (+/- Skyfall)	-1
Disease resistance	
Mildew	[7]
Yellow rust	7
Brown rust	7
Septoria	7
OWBM	-

Source: AHDB Recommended List winter wheat 2025/26 [ ] = limited data

Extase and Chevignon – two very successful, widely grown varieties across Europe,” says Mark. “Extase has already made a significant impact here in the UK, known for its clean disease profile and excellent untreated yield performance, and Chevignon was a top-performing bread variety in France and Germany.”

This pedigree wasn’t just about chasing yield or quality though, he notes. It was a deliberate attempt to combine resilience, stability, and milling potential in a way that met the requirements of a UK market still grappling with shifting disease pressures, weather extremes, and growing demands for sustainability.

Following its initial development, Equipe was entered into UK trials and selection, and soon began to stand out. “We were consistently seeing very strong results across the KWS trials network,” explains Mark. “It came through National List 1 and 2 cleanly, and following three years of independent testing, it was officially added to the AHDB RL last year.”

One of the most standout attributes

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### List-topping yield

One of the most standout attributes of KWS Equipe is its exceptional untreated yield – currently the highest on the RL, overtaking Extase for the first time, says KWS' Olivia Bacon.

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► exceptional untreated yield – currently the highest on the RL, overtaking Extase for the first time.  
“That strength comes from a solid, well-rounded disease package,” says KWS' Olivia Bacon.

“You're looking at 7s across the board for mildew, yellow rust, brown rust and septoria – and those numbers really translate in the field.”  
Mark agrees, adding that the variety has weathered several tough seasons with

## First impressions in a tough season

**A**lthough the ink may still be drying on the latest AHDB harvest reports, it's clear that 2025 has been one of the most disappointing and testing harvests for many. But in a year where the odds were stacked firmly against growers, Equipe has quietly stood its ground for Hampshire-based seed grower, Robert Stent.

Farming 200ha near Winchester, Robert is a long-standing specialist seed grower, working closely with breeders such as KWS to produce high-quality multiplication seed. “This season we had five different varieties across the farm including Equipe and some Extase, which proved an interesting comparison.”

Equipe was grown for seed on lighter chalk land – a decision that proved helpful given the heavy rainfall in early autumn, he says. “The heavier ground was just too wet, so we had to pivot and find somewhere to plant it. It was November by the time we drilled and this wasn't ideal – we were direct drilling into stubble in wet conditions.”

Despite this, Equipe grew away reasonably well and stood up to the season's extremes. “It was grown next door to some Extase and both were quite similar in terms of growth habit and maturity,” says Robert. “They were among the earliest wheats to harvest and stayed very clean, but disease pressure has

aplomb. “We’ve seen swings in disease dominance during the past few years – from yellow rust surges to heavy septoria pressure. Equipe has come through all of them consistently well.”

Its French breeding background is also proving timely, with growers increasingly concerned about yellow rust mutations. “Because of that different genetic base, Equipe hasn’t been hit by the new rust race this year,” says Olivia. “It’s still a 7 so it’s not immune, but it’s held up better than some other options.”

Importantly, Mark notes that no significant shifts in Equipe’s yellow rust rating are expected following the new race detections in 2025. “We’ve looked closely and so far, the genetics seem to be holding up well. It remains one of the more reliable options.”

## FEELING FAMILIAR

In the field, Equipe behaves in a way that should feel familiar to Extase growers – quick to establish, fast to move in the spring, and early to ear and harvest. “It gets going fast, so you have to be on the ball with early nitrogen



been low generally this year, so it’s hard to draw too many conclusions.”

Harvest has now wrapped up on the farm and while Robert is careful not to read too much into this season’s numbers, he says Equipe was one of the better performers. “Our yields are 20-30% down on where they should be and that’s across all crops; the drought hit us hard. But of all the wheats we had, Equipe seemed to hold up relatively well – probably the best out of all of the varieties.

“In a year like this, it’s hard to make any firm judgement. But if Extase is getting past its best, then Equipe may well be a strong successor in the Group 2 slot. From what I’ve seen, it definitely has potential.”

– just like with Extase,” says Olivia.

This earliness is likely to prove increasingly valuable, especially in seasons with spring droughts or intense early summer heat, adds

Mark. “This year is a perfect example – Equipe had already begun grain fill before temperatures started spiking, so it managed to lay down yield while other varieties were still catching up.”

In terms of drilling date, it offers a flexible sowing window from late September onwards and has also shown good performance from later sowings in November and December.

**“Anyone who’s previously liked or grown Extase will find this a natural progression.”**

As for spray timing and programme planning, Equipe’s disease ratings also bring flexibility, says Olivia. “If you’re delayed at T1 or T2, it’s not the end of the world. You have breathing room,

which really helps when working around weather or workload.”

Turning focus to marketing, and as a Group 2, Equipe naturally sits in the milling category, and so it’ll be a premium-chasing option for quality-minded growers.

From AHDB figures, the variety is delivering specific weights of 79.5kg/hl, a Hagberg Falling Number consistently over 300 seconds,



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- and a protein content of 12.2% – just marginally below Extase.

“That’s a solid package for a Group 2,” comments Mark. “If you’re targeting the premium market, Equipe gives you the confidence that you can hit spec – and with the agronomic performance to get it into the shed cleanly and reliably.”

So who should consider Equipe this autumn? For Mark, the answer is broad. “Anyone who’s previously liked or grown Extase will find this a natural progression. It has the same strengths – early maturity, good disease resistance, quality grain – but it’s gone a step further in untreated yield and balance.”

Olivia agrees: “I think Equipe will surprise a few people who were set on Extase.”

But it’s not just a variety for die-hard Group 2 growers, continues Mark. “If you’re looking to diversify your risk, especially in light of yellow rust concerns, Equipe is a strong companion to higher-yielding Group 4s that might be more vulnerable. You can hedge your bets with a cleaner, premium-chasing variety alongside your barn-fillers.”

## STRONG PROPOSITION

In essence, Equipe ticks a lot of boxes while avoiding many of the pitfalls that limit adoption. “There are no obvious weaknesses,” suggests Mark.

Echoing this view is Richard Meecham of Dorset-based Pearce Seeds who says the firm backed



## Favoured behaviours

**In the field, Equipe behaves in a way that should feel familiar to Extase growers – quick to establish, fast to move in the spring, and early to ear and harvest.**

Equipe early on. “We saw it in trials last year and anticipated it would make the RL – and it did.

“We were looking for something that could give us an uplift in performance – particularly on septoria – Equipe brings that with a score of 7, which is hugely important for growers in the West. In many ways, it’s a natural next step on from Extase.”

Although marketed as a Group 2, Richard suspects many growers will treat Equipe as a barn-filler rather than chase milling premiums. “A lot of what we sell in Group 2 doesn’t go for milling – it’s about high yields and reliable agronomics, Equipe seems to tick those boxes.”

Straw height was a key consideration too, adds Richard. “Being based in Dorset, we have a lot of livestock customers and the demand for decent straw is always there. That’s something growers are asking about up front.”

This year’s disease pressure – particularly yellow rust – has thrown a curveball for many, with several varieties seeing reduced ratings. But Equipe is holding up well. “We’ve only had it out in seed crops this season, as last year it was still a candidate, but trial results have been very promising. No big concerns around rust from what we’ve seen,” says Richard.

Despite the weather challenges of the past year – wet drilling conditions followed by spring droughts – Richard remains optimistic about how Equipe will fare when it hits growers’ fields. “I genuinely think it’ll be one of our top five varieties this year. Harvest results are still trickling in, but we’re hopeful it’ll be right up there yield-wise,” he concludes. ●

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