

## **For Immediate Release:**

### **Farmers Applaud Proactive Measures to Combat New, Destructive Strain of Wheat Rust**

**(Waterton, AB. Thursday July 9, 2009)** – The Grain Growers of Canada are applauding the announcement of Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz that the Government of Canada has committed 13 million dollars of funding to combat a new, devastating strain of Wheat Rust known as Ug99.

“Ug99 is seen as a devastating threat to the world’s food security. While it has not yet reached Canada, we are not an island,” said Doug Robertson, President of the Grain Growers of Canada. “We are pleased to see the federal government take proactive steps to propel Canada to the forefront of international efforts to combat this fungus.”

“Not only will this be potentially devastating to Canadian wheat farmers, but it will ravage resource-poor farmers, who are particularly susceptible to stem rust. This will further hinder international efforts to combat global poverty, by driving up food costs exponentially,” explained Robertson.

Ug99 stem rust was first found in Uganda in 1999. Spores from the fungus attach themselves to wheat stalk and take over the plant’s nutrient and water system. Canadian farmers have always combated various strains of stem rust, but the last major outbreak occurred in the 1950s. So far scientists have been unable to develop strains of wheat that are resistant to Ug99.

“The Grain Growers of Canada believe that with a threat of this magnitude, it is essential to have full cooperation between the public and private sectors in Canada and abroad. We call on all wheat researchers to work together wherever possible to end this threat to the world’s food supply.”

The Grain Growers of Canada represent the interests of the 80,000 Canadian grain, pulse and oilseed producers who are members of the Alberta Grain Commission, Alberta Barley Commission, Alberta Oat Rye and Triticale Association, Alberta Winter Wheat Producers Commission, Atlantic Grains Council, Alberta Pulse Growers, British Columbia Grain Producers Association, Canadian Canola Growers Association, Manitoba Corn Growers Association, Oat and Barley Council of Ontario, Prairie Oat Growers Association, Western Barley Growers Association, and Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

For more information on the Grain Growers of Canada, please visit [www.ggc-pgc.ca](http://www.ggc-pgc.ca).

- 30 -

Media contacts:

Doug Robertson  
President  
403-819-8372

Richard Phillips  
Executive Director  
613-875-1795