

Planting just two or three weeks early can make the difference between a bumper winter wheat crop and a disaster, said a University of Nebraska–Lincoln specialist.

Research at the West Central Research and Extension Center has shown a difference of up to 40 bushels per acre between wheat planted on Sept. 2 and wheat planted on the recommended planting date of Sept. 25, said Bob Klein, Western Nebraska Crops Specialist in North Platte.

He recommended using certified, treated seed of varieties that have done well in the producer's local area and planting on or after the recommended date for your area.

Diseases like wheat streak mosaic and crown root rot have a better chance of getting established before the weather cools in wheat that's planted early, Klein said. So it's important to avoid the warmer days of late summer and early fall if possible. Winter injury is also more likely in wheat planted earlier, which dries out the soil.

If a field has no residue to protect it from the wind, early planting may be unavoidable, Klein said. In that case, the more developed wheat provides cover to prevent silting under or blowing out by fall winds. As an alternative, he strongly recommended leaving residues on the field wherever possible and planting on the recommended date.