

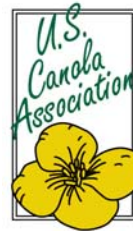
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Research Confirming Volunteer Canola Not Surprising or Concerning Volunteer Canola of All Types Expected and Controllable

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Scientists conducting field research in North Dakota confirmed that canola produced by modern biotechnology (“genetically modified” or “biotech”), like conventional canola, can establish “volunteer” plants outside of agricultural fields. The results, presented today in a poster at the Ecological Society of America’s annual meeting, showed that 86 percent of 406 canola plants tested positive for traits that confer tolerance to either glyphosate or glufonisate herbicide – currently, the only two biotech traits available in canola. The plants were collected from 5,400 kilometers of interstate, state and county roads in North Dakota.

“Because 85 to 90 percent of the U.S. and Canadian canola crop is grown from biotech seeds, we would expect the same percentage to be reflected in volunteer canola,” said Barry Coleman, executive director of the Northern Canola Growers Association and canola grower in North Dakota. “As with conventional canola production, it is not unusual or concerning that volunteer biotech canola was found on roadsides due to occasional seeds being misplaced during transport or harvesting.”

When biotech canola was originally evaluated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), they recognized that like traditional canola, biotech canola would volunteer and might require management in some areas. The USDA found no evidence that biotech canola would be more apt than traditional canola to outcompete other plant species. The agencies also considered the possibility that canola would breed with other species. The CFIA concluded that such crosses would not be invasive, nor result in increased weediness or invasiveness, and could be managed by current agronomic practices.

“Volunteer biotech canola is easily managed through mowing, tillage or one of several herbicides that do not contain the active ingredient (glyphosate or glufinosate) to which the canola is resistant,” noted Dale Thorenson, assistant director of the U.S. Canola Association and former canola grower in North Dakota. “What’s concerning on roadsides and in other areas are invasive species like leafy spurge that cannot be controlled by these methods.”

Volunteer canola of any kind can appear in crops following canola, such as wheat, barley and peas. That’s why farmers should scout fields following a canola rotation for volunteer plants.

“When planting canola, especially biotech varieties, farmers are expected to keep good records of fields and watch for volunteer plants,” added Thorenson. “If they occur, they should till or use any herbicide currently registered for control of volunteer canola. This is part of routine crop management.

“Moreover, volunteer canola does not infringe on the intellectual property rights of seed providers as it is an unintentional occurrence in nature. Therefore, farmers are not liable for trace amounts of patented biotech seeds that inadvertently make their way into non-agricultural land.”

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