

How We Grow Oats

Most oats are grown on family farms in Canada, many of which are multi-generational operations with strong ties to the land where farmers live and thrive. To grow a crop of oats takes great care, and Canada's top-quality oats are highly prized for their colour, weight and health benefits.

So how do oat farmers do it?



PREPARING LAND



In Canada, using conservation tillage is common. This means most oats are sown into a field that has the stubble from the prior year's crop. This practice has big environmental benefits, including reduced soil erosion and improved air quality. The stem and root of the crop, sometimes called crop residue, are left on the field which reduces wind erosion, resulting in less dust in the air. This also reduces the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, by retaining more carbon in organic matter. It also improves water retention in the soil; reduces weeds; and the stubble can provide shelter for wildlife, such as birds and small animals.

SEEDING



Direct seeding is generally done into the stubble. This reduces fossil fuel emissions from tractors which make fewer trips across the field. Modern equipment ensures that the seed is planted into the soil at just the right depth which helps get the crop off to a good start. The use of top-quality seed varieties has helped increase Canadian oat yields and improve the health benefits of eating oats by boosting the amount of beta glucan (a heart healthy fiber) produced in this high-quality crop.

CARING FOR THE CROP

Oats do well in cool climates like those found in the Canadian prairies. Farmers try to plant early and make maximum use of the summer growing season. They use a seeding rate that allows the crop to develop a good stand that is sturdy, clean, and free from weeds.



HARVESTING OATS

Removing the crop is a complex, busy time for farmers. They work hard year-around, but especially at harvest time. It's critical for farmers to be in the field at just the right time when the quality of the oats is at its peak. Some farmers cut the oats with a machine called a swather, after which it is collected by a combine that separates the oats from the rest of the plant. This equipment facilitates the reaping of a crop that is at a good moisture level, plump and ready for sale/market

STORING OATS

Farmers spend a considerable amount of money on grain storage in Canada. Therefore, Canadian on-farm storage is plentiful, allowing farmers to store the crop in grain bins on their farms. Sometimes they can deliver them immediately to market and use the robust storage and milling facilities that are available all across the prairies. It is these practices and facilities that have comfortably positioned Canada as one of the world's largest exporters of oats.

From start to finish, oats are treated with the same home-grown care one would use while preparing a great meal for their family because farmers and their families eat the same crops they grow as well!



For great oat recipes and information visit www.poga.ca.
