

# communicator

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF AGRI-RETAILERS

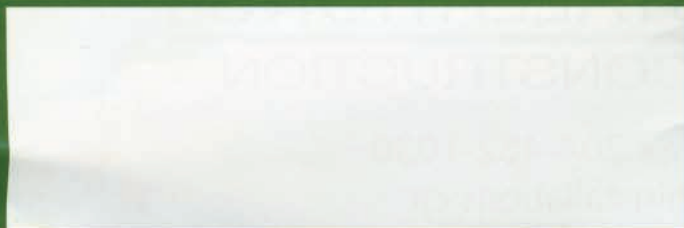
December 2007 | Vol. 28 | No. 5

\$4.50 + GST

## The Latest & Greatest in Farm Tech

**Pre-register  
for Convention  
& SAVE!**

**NEW Feature:**  
The HR Department



**Plus:**  
**It's Almost Here!**  
Putting the Finishing Touches  
on Your 2008 CAAR Convention

# Features

## Top 10 Technologies

This year's winning products and technologies is a groundbreaking bunch. From products currently grabbing a share of the market, to ones that are likely to make their mark over the coming year—and even one or two not yet available, but too exciting to ignore—this year's Top 10 provides a glimpse into how innovative the industry is.

The Winners Are...

- 25 **WeatherBug Network**
- 26 **Pyrasulfotole**
- 27 **Corn-based Bioplastic**
- 28 **Non-invasive Root Analysis System**
- 29 **Next Generation of Herbicide Tolerance**
- 31 **Mini Chromosome Stacking**
- 32 **Food to Order: Hybrid Seeds**
- 37 **Sunblock For Pesticides**
- 38 **Stover Harvester for Ethanol**
- 40 **Allergen-free Peanut**

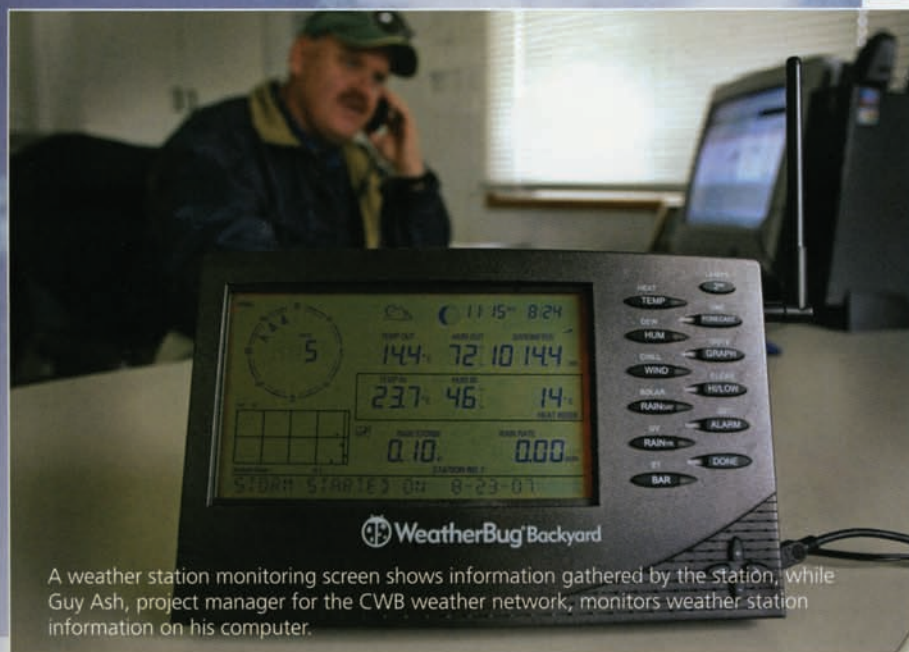
## Plus...

- 12 **Preview of the 2008 CAAR Convention in Winnipeg**
- 21 **Farm Machinery 2017**  
What do industry experts predict for ag equipment?

# WeatherBug Right as Rain

An intricate network of weather stations linked through the Internet gives farmers precise and timely information.

By Tamara Letkeman



A weather station monitoring screen shows information gathered by the station, while Guy Ash, project manager for the CWB weather network, monitors weather station information on his computer.

Farmers depend on accurate weather reports to make crucial decisions about their crops. If data is not accurate, farmers could end up spraying costly pesticide on a windy day, effectively kissing thousands of dollars of chemical goodbye. But now an extensive new network across Western Canada aims to stop that from ever happening again, by providing local, up-to-the-minute weather reports and severe weather alerts to farmers.

WeatherBug, a U.S.-based online provider of local weather information, launched its first major weather network in Canada in August. The project was conceived by the Canadian Wheat Board's weather and crop surveillance department, prompted by farmers' complaints that they didn't have enough detailed weather information to make informed agronomic decisions.

"We were hearing from farmers that no data was available for what they needed," said Guy Ash, project manager of the CWB weather network. "It was not very localized and there was no timeliness of information."

In response, the CWB and Pioneer Grain, a subsidiary of James Richardson International (JRI), teamed up with WeatherBug to build an extensive weather network for farmers linked through the Internet. The CWB and JRI have invested \$100,000 and \$60,000 respectively to help create a system that will eventually include

1,000 weather stations across Canada to deliver timely, detailed and accurate weather information to farmers and agri-retailers.

At this point the project is centred in the Prairie agricultural belt. Ash said there are now 80 operational stations in Western Canada, with the aim to install 600 over the next two to three years. JRI will have installed 60 weather stations at its agricultural business centres across Western Canada by the end of this year, while Parkland Agri Services, another project partner, will install 20 stations at its Alberta locations.

"Once the network is installed, producers will be able to access accurate, local weather information through our website," said Kevin Jacobson, marketing manager for Pioneer Grain. "The accuracy of the weather information provided by the WeatherBug stations will allow us to make better recommendations when it comes to herbicide application and effectiveness, forecasting disease threats, predicting harvest quality attributes and enable better weather record management."

Access to accurate weather information also translates into financial benefits for farmers. Before the advent of the WeatherBug network, farmers had to rely on reports from Environment Canada, that often gathers data at airports, which may be a long way from farmers' fields.

"Sometimes the farmer would be 50 or 60 kilometres away from the weather station," said Ash.

This meant the possibility of losing thousands of dollars of pesticide, herbicide or fungicide if a farmer, for example, sprayed the crops on a day where there were strong winds that weren't anticipated. Now, with highly detailed and localized data just a click away, farmers are less likely to lose costly chemicals to wind, storms or other severe weather phenomena.

"Access to weather information has major financial benefits for farmers, whether they're spraying valuable chemicals, predicting yields or pinpointing a farm management problem," said Greg Aranson, president and CEO of the CWB. "This network will also improve information used by CWB analysts to market farmers' grain for maximum return."

Since the launch of the WeatherBug network in August, the CWB has been hearing from farmers more than ever, but now the calls are of a much more enthusiastic nature.

"My phone's been ringing off the hook," said Ash. "I'm getting calls every day from farmers and agri-retailers who want to be part of the project." ♦