

Weed expert presented with soil conservation award



Bob Blackshaw's career has focused on weed management and soil conservation. | File photo

Former senior researcher at Agriculture Canada in Lethbridge was among those who explored herbicide resistance

The go-to guy for questions about weed management is the 2018 recipient of the Orville Yanke award.

Bob Blackshaw, the recently retired senior researcher at Agriculture Canada in Lethbridge, was presented with the award Dec. 13 at the Farming Smarter conference in Lethbridge.

Blackshaw has published more than 250 research papers in his career, focusing on weed management and soil conservation. He was hired at Agriculture Canada in 1986 after first working for Alberta Wheat Pool and Dupont.

Known for his expertise in soil science as well as weed science, Blackshaw has received many other awards for his research work. He was raised on a farm near Virden, Man., and obtained degrees at Brandon University, University of Manitoba and University of Guelph.

In accepting the award, Blackshaw said it was special because of its local nature.

"It comes from you. It comes from the people I've worked with over the last 30 years," he said.

Blackshaw said his early work involved conservation tillage and addressing issues surrounding soil erosion at a time when there were still 25 million acres of summerfallow land in the region. Weed control was a problem because Roundup and other chemical options were expensive.

His early weed control work concentrated on downy brome and foxtail barley. In later years, he was among the researchers who explored herbicide resistance in various prairie weeds.

Blackshaw said he has always had a strong belief in extension work. That belief was well illustrated in his attendance and presentations at many field days and industry workshops over more than 20 years.

The Orville Yanke award is a memorial to one of southern Alberta's earliest and most ardent promoters of soil conservation and has been presented annually since 2009.

Previous recipients include Ron Svanes, Ike Lanier, Rob Dunn, Ron Howard, Ross McKenzie, Don McLennan, Ric Swihart, Richard Fritzler and Don Wentz.