

# Lupin beans:

*They won't lose their cool in cold weather*

BY JACK HUBLEY

COUDERSPORT — Northern tier farmers looking for a homegrown source of protein would do well to take a look at lupin beans, according to Potter County dairyman, Carl Erway.

Because of northern Pennsylvania's cold spring weather and shorter growing season, Erway says he's not willing to gamble on soybeans. So when he heard about the lupin's affinity for cooler weather he planted 21 acres last summer to give them a try.

Despite an unusually dry spring, his crop yielded 45 bushels per acre. Erway figures it cost him \$130 a ton to grow, harvest and grind his beans, which is considerably cheaper than buying soybeans at the current rate, he says.

And since the dairyman can buy his energy—in the form of corn—cheaper than he can grow it, he's content to allow the southern counties grow his corn while he increases his lupin bean acreage.

According to Jim Hoopes, who grows and distributes lupin seed, the beans have outgrown their longstanding reputation for bitter taste. Hoopes, who produces seed for Good Earth Agri Products of Minnesota, says that sweeter varieties began appearing on the scene about 10 years ago. Like soybeans, lupins are a legume, capable of fixing up to 150 pounds of nitrogen per acre, according to a Good Earth brochure.

Like Carl Erway, Hoopes lists the lupin's preference for cold spring growing conditions as one of

its greatest virtues. "It's a cool-climate crop," says Hoopes, who planted his beans on April 17 last year. The beans were about four to five inches high by May 10, when a cold front dropped the thermometer to 15°. "That burnt my alfalfa pretty bad," recalls Hoopes. But the next day you couldn't even tell it hit the beans."

On the other hand, unusually warm weather early in the year may injure the crop, Hoopes cautions. Penn State agronomist, Elwood Hatley agrees, pointing out that the lupin's low tolerance for heat stress makes it a riskier crop to grow than soybeans. "They really require vernalization (a cold treatment) to produce the yields," he says.

From a nutritional standpoint, lupins contain less oil than soybeans, notes Hatley. They also are somewhat lower in protein at about 35 percent, compared to soybeans' 40 percent level.

Despite lupin's lower protein level, however, swine producers may find them to be an economical alternative to soybeans, since lupins don't have to be heat-treated before being fed to simple-stomached animals such as swine.

Carl Erway says that his cows seem to do quite well on lupins. "I personally like to grind them to get them fine, more like cracked corn," says Erway, who presently feeds them to his high group as a 50-50 concentrate with three pounds of Agway Buxmont 40 percent concentrate. He also notes that he has seen a slight increase in butterfat content since feeding



Growing toward the sky, these lupin pods resemble a field of up-side-down soybeans. The lupin's preference for cold climates makes them a good northern tier alternative.

lupins.

Jim Hoopes, whose harvest averaged 55 bushels last year, finds the beans easy to harvest. Because they can be planted early, lupins are ready to harvest in September before the onset of bad

weather. And, unlike soybeans, lupin pods grow upward and stay that way until harvest time. "So you can run your combine 10 to 12 inches off the ground," Hoopes points out.

Based on what he's seen so far, Carl Erway plans to increase his

lupin production to 38 acres this year. "As the noose gets tighter around the dairyman's neck, we do have to keep looking for ways to produce our own feedstuffs," he points out. "Lupins are a good crop to keep an eye on."

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