

Canadian Grass and Legume Seed Data: 2018 Inspected Acres

Overview:

Certified grass and legume seed production in Canada, in 2018, saw a dramatic decrease in inspected acres. With a decrease of close to 37,000 acres from the previous year, inspected acres fell by over 25% from 2017. The biggest drops in acres were from alfalfa and timothy seed production, which saw acres fall by almost 12,000 (alfalfa) and 11,000 (timothy) respectively. All inspected grass and legume seed categories saw a decrease in acres. In total, 2018 saw 145,000 acres of pedigreed grass and legume seed production across the 4 western provinces. Once again, no pedigreed seed production occurred east of the Manitoba border. **Note:** please review “Crop Kind” descriptions at the bottom of this article for crop kind descriptions.



CFIA: 2018 Acres Applied For Inspection - Crop by Province, Acres											Change	%	
Crop Kind	PEI	NS	NB	QUE	ONT	MB	SK	AB	BC	2018	2,017	(+/-) AC's	change
Alfalfa						12,028	14,008	43,614		69,650	81,573	(11,923)	-14.62%
Birdsfoot Trefoil						2,237	100			2,337	2,872	(535)	-18.63%
Bromegrass						498	2,454	3,995	478	7,425	10,750	(3,325)	-30.93%
Clover						920	2,755	921		4,596	6,243	(1,647)	-26.38%
Fescue						5,277	1,155	6,725	300	13,457	18,675	(5,218)	-27.94%
Ryegrass						13,259	1,970	875		16,104	19,204	(3,100)	-16.14%
Timothy						13,847	3,545	7,096	1,796	26,284	37,177	(10,893)	-29.30%
Wheatgrass						-	1,470	4,646	30	6,146	6,387	(241)	-3.77%
Totals	-	-	-	-	-	48,066	27,457	67,872	2,604	145,999	182,881	(36,882)	(0)

Inspected Acres by Crop: Pedigreed Alfalfa Seed

- Although pedigreed alfalfa seed production fell by 11,923 acres in 2018, the over 69,000 acres that were inspected were still above the 10 year average for pedigreed alfalfa acres (58,879 acres).
- Alberta led the country in alfalfa seed production with over 43,000 acres, but this acreage was down by over 8,000 acres from 2017. Alberta production is centered in the Brooks region of the province.
- Saskatchewan was 2nd in the country with 14,000 acres of production (down 2,400 acres)
- Manitoba saw over 12,000 acres of pedigreed alfalfa seed production in 2018 (down 1,400 acres)
- With huge production in recent years, the price for alfalfa seed, both pedigreed and common, has fallen drastically, resulting in many acres taken out of production, and fewer new production contracts being offered
- Alfalfa is still the most widely grown pedigreed forage seed crop in Canada.

Pedigreed Clover Seed Production

- 2018 pedigreed clover seed production fell by over 35% from 2017, with 4,600 acres inspected.
- Saskatchewan led the nation in acres, with 2,755 acres inspected.
- Alberta and Manitoba had virtually identical 920 acres for inspection.
- Clover crops grown in Canada for pedigreed production include red, alsike, sweet and white.
- Although pedigreed clover seed production fell by 1,600 acres in 2018, acres were still 200 above the 10 year average for acres.

Pedigreed Birdsfoot Trefoil Seed Production

- Pedigreed production of Birdsfoot Trefoil remains almost exclusive to Manitoba (2,200 acres), with only another 100 acres found in Saskatchewan.
- Manitoba acres fell by 500 in 2018.



Birdsfoot trefoil field

Pedigreed Timothy Seed

- The majority of Canadian timothy seed production is now of the pedigreed kind, with acres spread throughout the 3 prairie provinces. It is the 2nd most widely grown forage seed crop in Canada.
- Manitoba leads in production and acres, with close to 14,000 acres inspected in 2018. However, this was a result of a huge loss in acres of 6,600 from the previous year!
- Alberta's 7,100 acres of inspected timothy seed production ranked 2nd in Canada, but was down by almost 3,000 acres from 2017.
- Saskatchewan saw 3,500 acres of pedigreed timothy seed in 2018, a modest decrease of 800 acres from 2017.

Pedigreed Bromegrass Seed Production

- 2018 saw 7,400 acres of bromegrass (mainly "smooth", "meadow" and "hybrid") inspected. This is 500 acres below the 10 year average and a 31% decrease in acres from 2017.
- Acres are found mainly in Alberta (3,995) and Saskatchewan (2,454).

Pedigreed Ryegrass Seed Production

- Total pedigreed ryegrass seed production, mainly perennial ryegrass, is centered in Manitoba (13,000 acres), although Saskatchewan had about 2,000 acres in 2018.
- Manitoba's acres were down by 2,800 from 2017, but Saskatchewan showed an increase of over 900 acres this past year.

Pedigreed Fescue Seed Production

- 2018 saw pedigreed fescue seed production fall by over 5,000 acres (to 13,457), with the majority of it being creeping red fescue (7,000 acres) found in the Alberta/B.C. Peace region and tall fescue, (5,300 acres) found in Manitoba.
- Overall acres of “fescue” are down by 38% from 2017!
- Acres of meadow fescue have increased in recent years, but actual acres are unavailable.

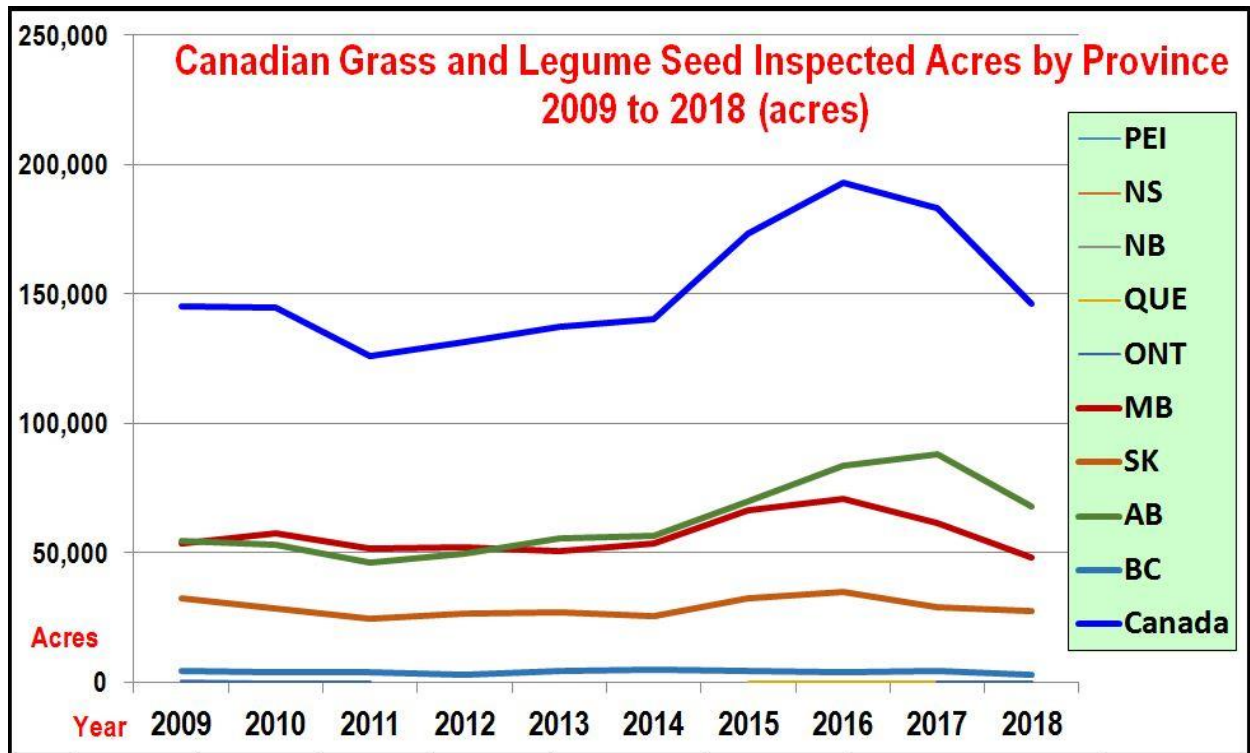


Canadian Pedigreed Grass and Legume Seed Production by Crop Kind (Acres) 2008 to 2018								
	Alfalfa	Bromegrass	Fescue	Timothy	Birdsfoot Trefoil	Clover	Ryegrass	Wheatgrass
2008	57,057	12,353	23,131	38,403	5,707	4,186	25,084	8,644
2009	49,159	10,075	17,826	33,582	4,206	4,123	19,456	6,808
2010	50,866	7,694	14,453	26,454	4,143	3,195	30,112	7,596
2011	44,116	6,434	10,422	26,025	5,010	3,600	24,074	6,319
2012	47,456	5,138	10,875	33,012	7,315	3,886	18,469	5,290
2013	51,018	5,587	12,039	37,582	7,442	4,247	15,564	3,857
2014	56,319	5,372	10,230	41,271	3,910	2,494	15,714	4,959
2015	69,967	6,685	14,501	43,763	2,606	5,870	24,851	5,044
2016	81,260	9,872	19,398	42,246	2,107	6,106	25,386	6,376
2017	81,573	10,750	18,675	37,177	2,872	6,243	19,204	6,387
2018	69,650	7,425	13,457	26,284	2,337	4,596	16,104	6,146
10 yr avg (08-17)	58,879	7,996	15,155	35,951	4,532	4,395	21,791	6,128
acre Δ from 10 yr avg	10,771	-571	-1,698	-9,667	-2,195	201	-5,687	18

Summary:

2018’s dramatic drop in all Canadian grass and legume pedigreed seed production acres is a direct result of overproduction the past few years, especially the huge yields from alfalfa seed production and for timothy seed. The surplus seed has to be moved to create a better price environment, which, in the meantime, will result in less inspected acres in the nearby future. The demand for Canadian certified seed production should continue, primarily in the form of contracted certified seed production back to contracting companies, once this surplus has moved. Although better management and more work is required, pedigreed production of grass and legume seed allows growers to continue to diversify their farm operations, and hopefully, continue to be profitable in the future.





Note: Due to Canada's Freedom of Information Act (FOIP), many plant types are not broken down to species level. The main Canadian grass/legume seed species applied for inspection includes:

- **Bromegrass:** primarily meadow bromegrass, smooth bromegrass or hybrid bromegrass
- **Fescues:** primarily creeping red fescue, tall fescue, or meadow fescue
- **Clovers:** primarily red clover, alsike clover, sweet clover, or white clover
- **Ryegrasses:** primarily perennial ryegrass or annual ryegrass
- **Wheat grasses:** primarily crested wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, northern wheatgrass, pubescent wheatgrass, or intermediate wheatgrass.

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