



APG AND OTHER COMMISSIONS JOINTLY FUND NEW RESEARCH POSITION AT U OF A

CONFIRMING NATURAL ENEMIES FOR PEA PESTS IS A PRIORITY



Dr. Boyd Mori

Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) joined forces with three other Alberta commissions to fund a new assistant professor position specializing in agricultural entomology at the University of Alberta.

The position was created by APG, Alberta Barley, Alberta Canola and Alberta Wheat. Dr. Boyd Mori officially started in this new role that includes teaching, research and service on August 1.

“With the support of all four grower groups, I am developing a program to help out all the different commodities in different ways,”

Mori said. “We’re trying to check off some of the priorities that some of the groups have. There is somewhat of a focus on natural enemies and I am proposing to start the research projects with peas and barley. What I’m really interested in trying out is using a molecular technique to determine what the natural enemies are actually feeding on within the field.”

Mori said that some work has been done in this area previously, but his work will focus on specific species. For example, the new research project will include conducting a molecular gut content analysis on a

ground beetle to see everything that it has eaten in the last 24-48 hours to determine how efficient it is at controlling pests in the field.

He said that if you look at www.fieldheroes.ca, there are great scouting guides, but there is limited information available about the impact of many natural enemies of field pests. Mori plans to work closely with AAFC Lethbridge Research Scientist Haley Catton to fill in some of those knowledge gaps.

“This will help us determine what are our important natural enemies species,” Mori said. “A lot of our natural enemies are omnivorous, so they might even be eating seeds. This will help us determine which ones we should really be paying attention to and helping to promote in our agricultural ecosystem.”

The overall theme of Mori’s program is integrated pest management focused on finding alternative tools and also look at host plant resistance to pests. He said that the natural enemies research is likely the most significant for pulse producers, and future plans also include looking at aphids in lentil crops.

Leanne Fischbuch, Executive Director of Alberta Pulse Growers, said the organization is pleased to have an expert like Mori undertaking this important research to benefit pulses and other crops.



Aphids on lentils.



Carabid beetle on lentils.

Photo credit: Jon Williams

“Commissions like Alberta Pulse and our other commission partners are mandated to support research,” she said. “The opportunity to partner with Barley, Canola and Wheat to support a skilled researcher who understands provincial entomological challenges and who will work to communicate their results to our membership was a key part of supporting the five-year opportunity with Dr. Mori at the University of Alberta. We are pleased to be part of an industry team that will engage with Dr. Mori.”

The creation of the jointly-funded position is also valuable for the University of Alberta, said Dr. Stanford Blade, Dean of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences.

“We are very pleased with the support we have received from the Alberta Pulse Growers and our other crop commission partners to hire Dr. Boyd Mori,” Blade said. “Dr. Mori is an accomplished entomologist with a strong record of innovative research in western Canada on key aspects of integrated pest management. We look forward to Dr. Mori connecting with crop producers through his

development of a teaching and research program which will increase profitability while reducing risk for Alberta farmers.”

The University of Alberta position will build on Mori’s work in his previous roles, including most recently as a research scientist in insect ecology for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in Saskatoon. He was the recipient of the Early Career Research and Leadership Award from the International Branch of the Entomological Society of America in 2018.

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Mori is not unfamiliar with Edmonton as he earned his Ph. D. from the University of Alberta, which is also where he met his wife.

The couple moved back to Edmonton this summer with their two young children so that Mori could accept the new position that allows him to build on the many professional relationships he has developed.

“I really enjoy Alberta,” Mori said. “I am excited to speak more to producers, to the commodity groups and develop new projects.”