

# Idaho holds first-ever Barley Yield Contest

By Sean Ellis

*Idaho Farm Bureau Federation*

BOISE – Idaho’s first-ever Barley Yield Contest is being hailed as a successful launch and the Idaho Barley Commission, which held the contest, plans to make it a national competition next year.

“The first year of the barley yield contest has been a positive and exciting start, with strong participation and valuable insights gained, but we recognize that there is significant potential for growth,” said Sydney Anderson,” the IBC’s program manager for the yield contest.

For one, organizers hope to see more entries from across Idaho as well from other major barley-growing states “to further enrich the competition and highlight the diversity of growing conditions and best practices,” Anderson said.

“As with any new initiative, there are certainly areas that need fine-tuning,” she added. “We’ve gathered a lot of helpful feedback, and we’re focused on refining the contest to make it as beneficial to growers as possible.”

Idaho typically leads the nation in total barley production and Idaho farmers produced 39 percent of the total U.S. supply of barley in 2024. Most Idaho barley is used the beer-production process, while some is grown as human food and some is used as animal feed.

During the inaugural contest in 2024, Joey Wallace with Driscoll Bros. Farms in Jerome won the title for the highest yield with 241 bushels an acre. That was achieved with a winter variety: Utah10201.

Trevor Mulberry from Idaho Agri-Investments won the top spot in the Percent Over County Average Category. Wallace’s yield – 238 bushels per acre – outperformed the Twin Falls County average by 72 percent. By comparison, Wallace’s average yield exceeded the Jerome County average by 65 percent.

Wallace and Mulberry are both Scouler Barley MVP growers.

Anderson said the county average category, which compares each grower’s yield to their county’s historical average, ensures all growers, regardless of region, have a fair shot at winning.

Idaho’s diverse climate and soil conditions are examples that make this category essential because it recognizes agronomic skill and adaptability, not just the highest absolute yield, she said.

“High-yielding winter barley seed selection (UT10201), favorable weather conditions, and strategic crop rotation – this field followed corn – were key factors in achieving a winning yield,” Mulberry said in an IBC news release. “Our agronomic practices with precision in fertilization, growth regulators, herbicides, and timely irrigation all played a significant role.”

Wallace said that “winning barley yields come from a solid overall program—good seed, fertility, and the right inputs—but it’s the details that make the biggest difference. Paying attention to timing, plant health, and field conditions throughout the season is what really pushes yields to the top.”

Dustin Miller (201 bushels an acre) of Jerome County also demonstrated outstanding agronomic practices, utilizing precision seed placement and a balance fertility plan to achieve top results for irrigated spring barley.

“Our success starts with a solid barley program built on good crop rotation, top-notch genetics like Molson Coors M-179, and a balanced fertility plan—50-60% pre-plant with the rest applied foliar alongside herbicide, fungicide and growth regulator,” he said. “One of the biggest differences has been our Lemken drill. The precision seed placement and excellent seed-to-soil contact really set our crop up for strong, even emergence and top yields.”

Contest winners won trips to the 2025 Commodity Classic in Denver, which is billed as “America’s largest farmer-led, farmer-focused agricultural and educational experience.”

While maximizing yield is a key objective of the Barley Yield Contest, maintaining high quality is just as important, Anderson said.

“Our goal is to encourage growers to implement best management practices that enhance both yield and quality,” she said.

She said contest organizers are exploring ways to incorporate a quality component to recognize growers who achieve both exceptional yield and superior grain quality.

The contest is open to all barley growers regardless of what variety they grow. This year’s contest had participation from both malting and feed barley growers.

Anderson said the IBC is encouraging growers from all parts of the state and beyond, whether dryland or irrigated, to participate in this year’s contest.

“This program will allow us to collect valuable data to enhance best practices, improve efficiency, and drive innovation, while rewarding growers for their efforts to push the boundaries on yield,” she said.

“Whether a farm is in a high-yielding area or a challenging environment, the Barley Yield Contest offers growers a chance to showcase their success,” Anderson said.

If growers don't have time to submit an entry, they are encouraged to reach out to Anderson (208) 697-7236, Brett Wilken of Scoular (208)749-8881, or a county Extension agent for assistance.

Anderson can also be reached by email at [Sydney.anderson@barley.idaho.gov](mailto:Sydney.anderson@barley.idaho.gov) and Wilken's email is [bwilken@scoular.com](mailto:bwilken@scoular.com).

Entry forms for the 2025 contest will be available soon on the IBC website at [idahobarleycommission.org/barley-yield-contest/](http://idahobarleycommission.org/barley-yield-contest/).

28 Feb 2025