

WINTER WHEAT YELLOW RUST SPRING 2026 UPDATE



Widespread infection on Yr15 varieties continues into 2026

Following the confirmed breakdown of Yr15 resistance in 2025, early observations in 2026 show that yellow rust remains active on varieties previously considered highly resistant. Infection has been reported across multiple regions, including eastern and central England and parts of Scotland. So far, UKCPVS has received 57 wheat yellow rust samples, with the highest numbers from Lincolnshire, Warwickshire, Norfolk and Hertfordshire. Of these, 34 samples (60%) came from varieties confirmed to carry Yr15, showing that these varieties make up a substantial proportion of early-season infections (Figure 1 and 2).

The most frequently sampled Yr15 varieties include Mayflower, Champion and SY Cheer. This shows that infection is affecting several widely grown varieties, rather than being confined to a single variety. Together, these findings confirm that the Yr15-virulent strain has been established and is becoming widespread and active early in the growing season in the UK (Figure 3).

Implications for resistance and crop protection

The continued presence of yellow rust on Yr15 varieties is a clear warning against over-reliance on single major resistance genes. Varieties that previously looked strong at both seedling and adult plant stages are now showing reduced protection under current UK pathogen populations.

More durable resistance will depend on building in greater diversity. Gene stacking, together with a combination of all-stage resistance (ASR) and adult plant resistance (APR), will be key to improving resilience and reducing the risk of future breakdowns.

Ongoing surveillance

UKCPVS continues to monitor rust populations and test representative isolates on the full set of RL varieties and candidate lines under both field and controlled environment conditions.

Further submissions of wheat yellow rust and wheat brown rust samples are encouraged. These samples are essential for ongoing surveillance and for tracking changes in pathogen virulence across UK wheat crops.

Figure 1. UK map showing the counties that submitted wheat yellow rust samples in 2026

Total samples received: 57

No. of samples per county:

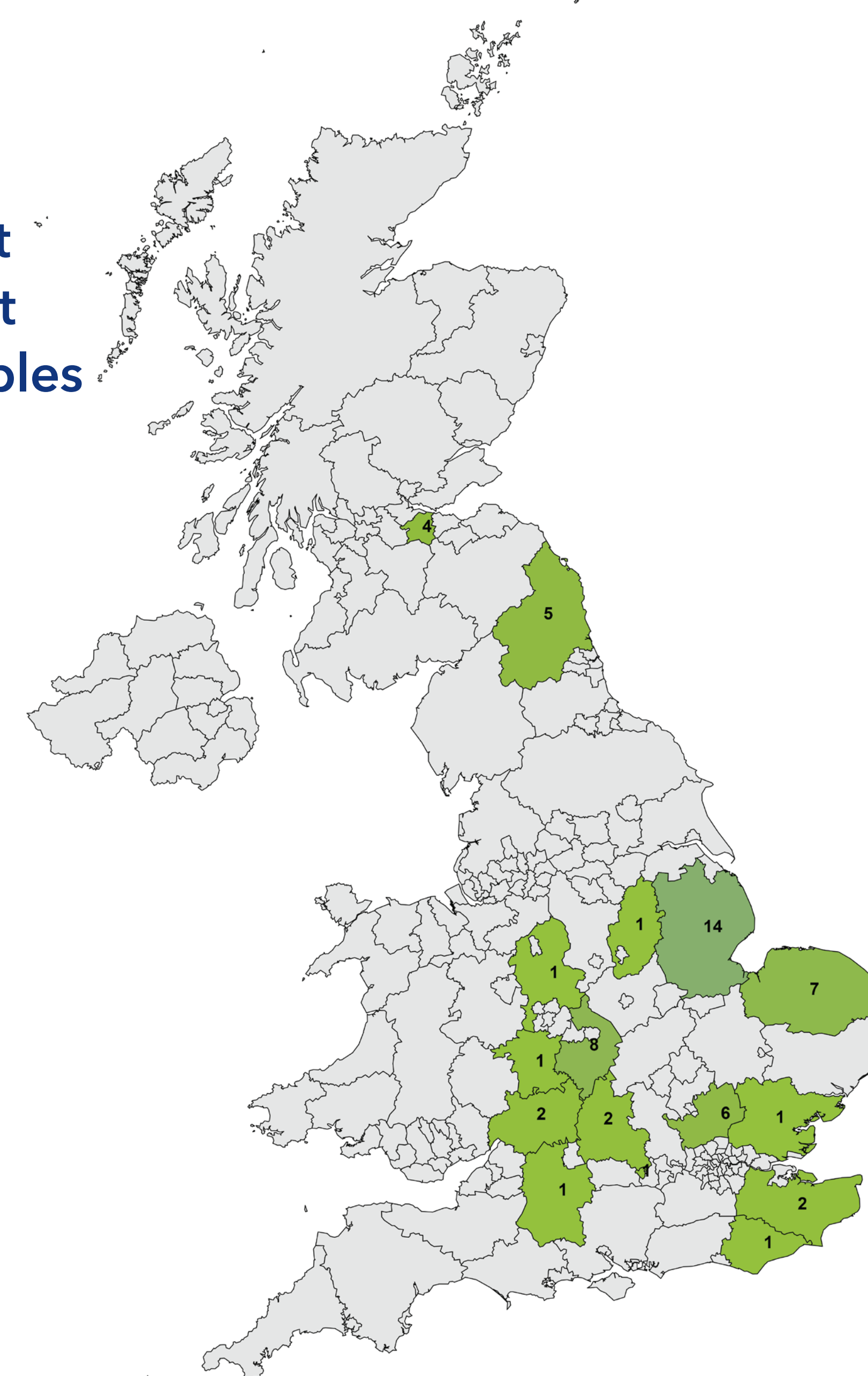
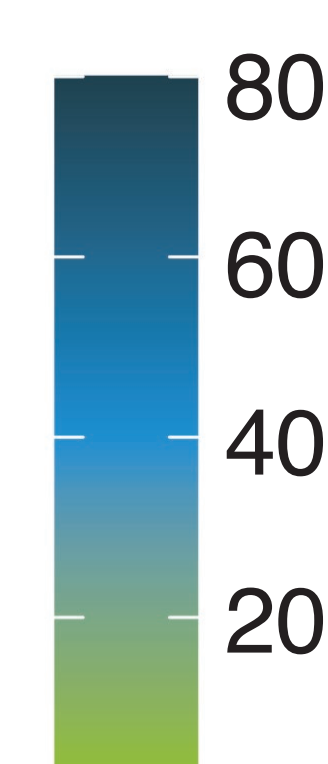


Figure 2. Yellow rust samples received to date from varieties with and without Yr15

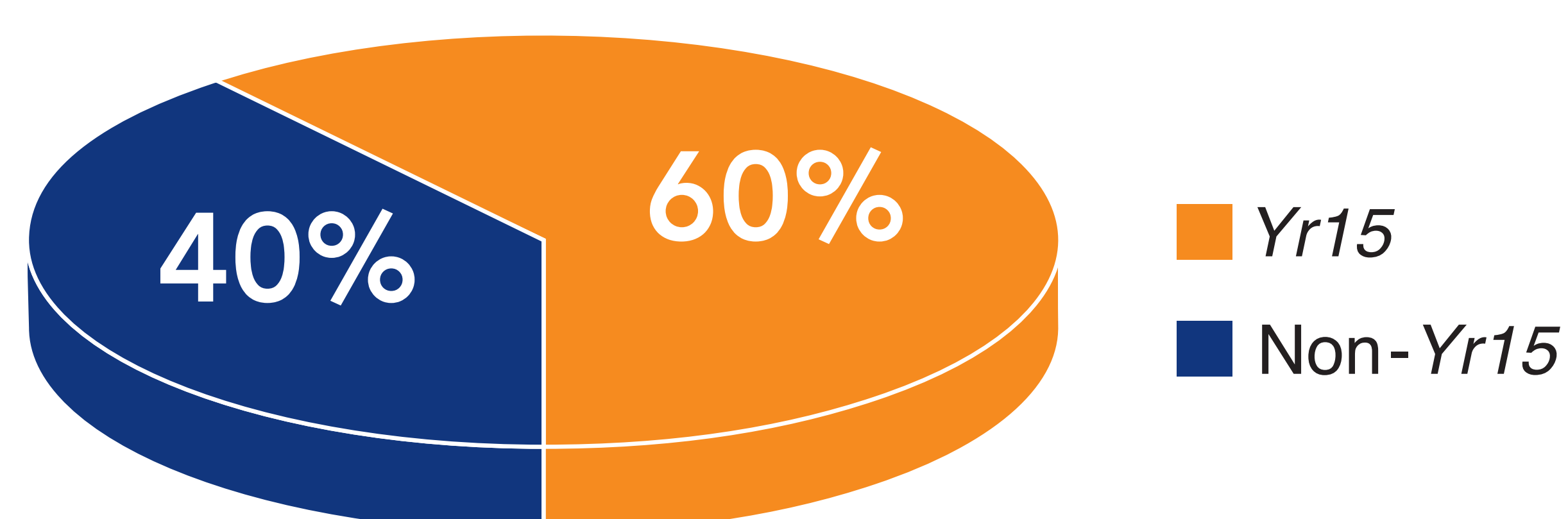
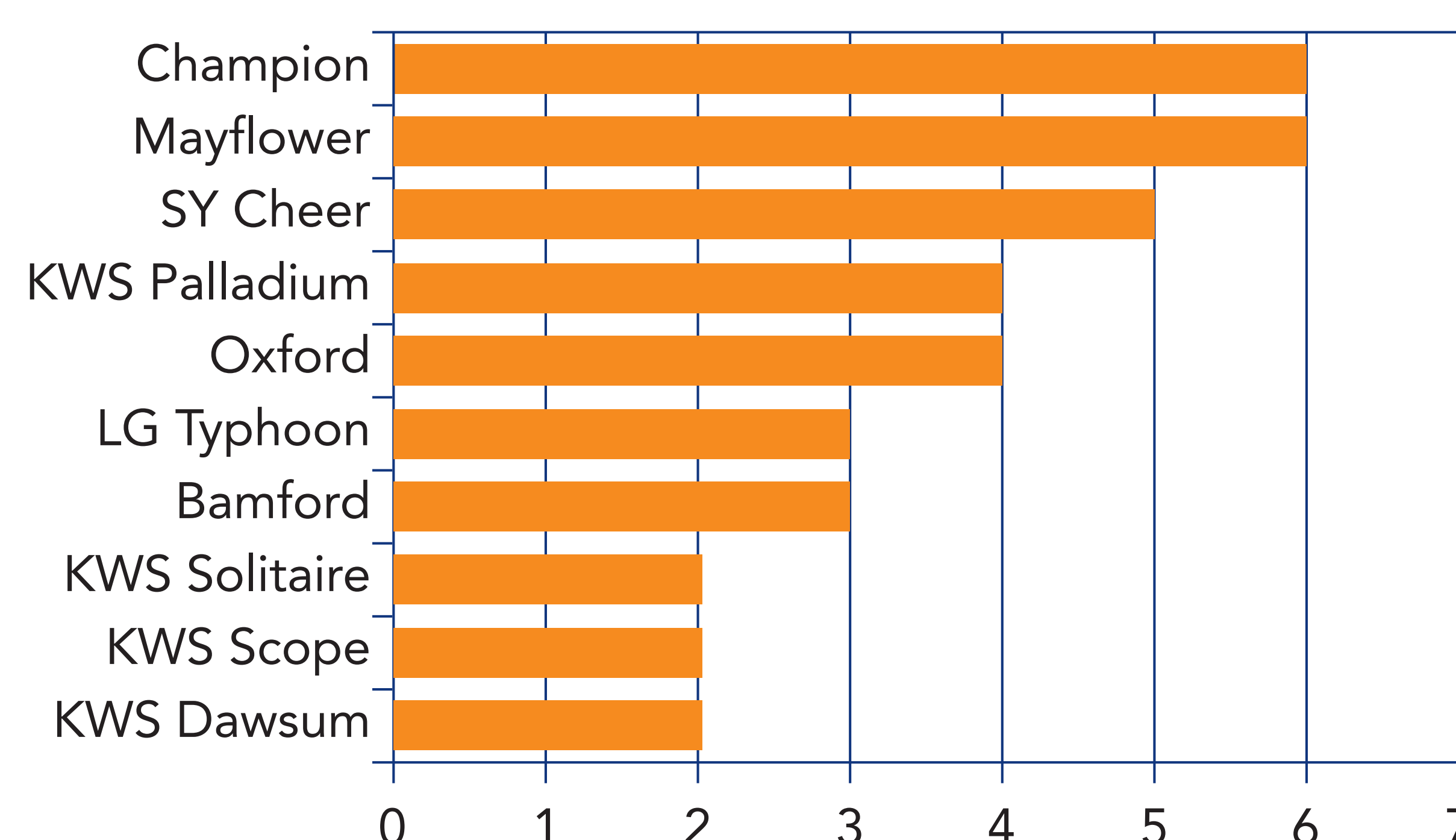


Figure 3. Most frequently submitted varieties to UKCPVS up to March 2026



SEND US YOUR RUST SAMPLES!

Samples from any wheat variety can be sent via the FREEPOST UKCPVS service. It is essential to obtain as diverse a set of samples as possible from across the country. Rare and unusual races are often found in only one sample from one location. For more information including sampling instructions and contacts scan the QR code:



The UK Cereal Pathogen Virulence Survey (UKCPVS) monitors cereal rusts in the UK, detecting and warning industry and growers of new races of disease emerging on resistant varieties. It is funded by Defra and AHDB and has been managed by Niab since its inception nearly 60 years ago.