Wheat streak mosaic virus (WSMV) has been confirmed in Richland County and is suspected in Valley County. This is a virus that can impact not only wheat (both spring and winter) but also barley and durum as well as some grassy weeds (such as downy Brome). The virus is spread by mites such as the wheat curl mite and the brown wheat mite; these mites may be carried quite a distance (up to 2 miles, though 1/4 of a mile is more common) by the wind. Symptoms include yellowing of the leaves in a streaked or stippled pattern, with severely infected plants yellowing to a lemon yellow color (which may be confused with nutrient deficiencies). Symptoms usually appear at the edges of a field, especially downwind of infected fields, near volunteer wheat or patches of downy brome and usually occurs in the spring following new growth. Symptoms then tend to spread towards the center of the field. Infection can result in stunted growth, inability to form a head, low test weight if a head does form and/or premature death of the plant, depending on the growth stage of the plant when infected. The symptoms can be easily confused for other problems such as nutrient deficiencies (especially sulfur or nitrogen), herbicide injuries, frost damage or barley yellow dwarf. Losses can reach up to 100% in some fields. If you suspect WSMV please contact the extension agent Jeffrey Chilson at 406-787-5312 or by email at jeffrey.chilson@montana.edu .

Please be aware that there was a slight error on the announcement for Wheat Streak Mosaic Virus (WSMV). The announcement stated that it can be transmitted by the brown wheat mite, in addition to the wheat curl mite. However, WSMV is spread only by the wheat curl mite.