

**2024 American Oat Workers' Conference
Award for Distinguished Service to Oat Improvement**



Roger A. Caspers

Roger received his B.S. in Agronomy from the University of Minnesota (UMN) in 1993. Upon completion, he accepted a position to coordinate the UMN Oat Breeding and Genetics program under the direction of Dr. Deon Stuthman. With the retirement of Dr. Stuthman in 2009, Roger assumed the role of program lead as it transitioned to new leadership, helping with the development and eventual release of UMN oat cultivar 'Deon'. In 2014, Roger joined the Cereal Disease Laboratory as a USDA-ARS Agricultural Research Technician with Dr. Shahryar Kianian, focusing on disease resistance of oat. Primary responsibilities included coordinating the efforts in the Buckthorn Nursery and the Uniform Oat Performance Nurseries. Those efforts continued even during the Covid19 pandemic years, when Roger single handedly planted the entire Buckthorn Nursery and collected the data for all participating cooperators.

Roger grew up on a dairy farm in central Minnesota. Work ethic and an interest in how plants work developed during this time. During his college years, he worked as an hourly for the same oat program he would eventually coordinate. It was during this time that he was very fortunate to work directly with the people that would shape his life. Jim Stage (long time UMN oat field

technician) took a chance and hired him, even though he had full complement of student workers at the time. Dr. Howard Rines (USDA-ARS), a very intelligent and approachable scientist, helped advise and mentor Roger through his formative oat years. Richard Halstead (USDA-ARS) became a good friend and was a great co-worker in all respects.

But it was Dr. Stuthman that had the most profound influence. He encouraged Roger to make those worldly connections, highlighted in 2000 with a trip to New Zealand for the IOC and a winter increase plot visit. Roger has truly cherished all those connections made in the oat community. He wishes to thank all those coworkers and collaborators who have been so kind and helpful to him.