



Winter education for Treasure Valley growers

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension winter commodity meetings educate growers about the latest research and production practices to help them be profitable and safe.

The Situation

Winter is considered the best time to provide outreach and education to agricultural producers and pesticide applicators. Because of the nature of their work, winter is the time of year they set aside to attend educational seminars about the commodities they produce and/or to obtain the state required recertification credits for their pesticide license. The purpose of the Treasure Valley Winter agricultural commodity schools is to educate growers about the latest technology from industry and University research. We collaborate with allied industry to develop programs that are relevant and provide needs-based educational opportunities. Additionally, our educational programs offer pesticide recertification credits for currently licensed pesticide applicators and training for individuals who seek to become licensed.

Our Response

Planning for winter meetings starts in late summer to ensure adequate preparation time for program coordinators and to secure speakers and industry support. With adequate preparation time we can develop and conduct quality programs that are relevant to our intended audience and will have the desired impacts. Program content is based on needs assessments that are collected at commodity meetings, field days, and input from internal and external stakeholders.

Below is a list of the winter educational programs offered each year.

The Treasure Valley Irrigation Conference is held in December. This program is a collaborative effort with Oregon State University faculty. The conference location rotates between Idaho and Oregon and offers Certified Crop Advisor Credits.

A Pesticide Applicator Recertification class is held each year in December, in Caldwell. This program offers six pesticide license recertification credits.

The Idaho/Oregon Winter Seed School for alfalfa seed growers is held in Idaho in January of each year. The program is a collaborative effort between the University of Idaho Extension and the Idaho and Oregon Alfalfa Seed Growers' Associations and offers pesticide recertification credits for both states.

The Spanish Language Pesticide Safety Education Program is held in February in Canyon County. This program is conducted entirely in Spanish and participants learn safe pesticide handling practices, application techniques, and personal protection. Participants earn the U.S. EPA Pesticide Handler Certification Card.

The Treasure Valley Bean School is held in February in Canyon County. The program provides growers with up-to-date research-based information on dry bean production practices. Pesticide recertification credits are offered.

The Pesticide Safety Education Program for pre-licensing is held in March in Caldwell. The program is a multiday class that prepares participants for the Idaho pesticide certification examinations. Upon passing the exams, students are eligible to become a certified, licensed pesticide applicator in Idaho.

Program Outcomes

University of Idaho Extension sponsored winter outreach and educational programs are an effective way to keep growers and industry up-to-date on the latest research, crop production and safety practices related to pesticide applications. Evaluations conducted at the conclusion of these programs indicate they are having a positive impact on crop production and the environment. Below are examples of impacts from some of our winter 2014/2015 programs.

Treasure Valley Irrigation Conference

After learning about soil health, 71 percent of evaluation participants indicated they were “more likely” to implement irrigation Best Management Practices to improve soil health.

Pesticide Applicator Recertification Training

After attending this program, 73 percent of participants indicated they were likely to choose a herbicide with a different mode of action when making consecutive applications to the same field to help manage chemical resistance.

Spanish Pesticide Safety Education

Before the class, 53 percent of attendees understood how to select and use personal protective equipment, and how to protect themselves from pesticide exposure. Following the class this number increased to 100 percent.

Idaho/Oregon Winter Seed School

Following a seminar on spray drift, 71 percent of attendees said they were more likely to implement practices learned at the seed school to minimize spray drift and reduce the potential for offsite pesticide movement and damage to other crops and pollinators.

Treasure Valley Bean School

Program participants reported a 66 percent increase in knowledge about proper application procedures for white mold control in dry beans.

Pesticide Safety Education Program for pre-licensing

In 2015 this class was attended by 45 people in Caldwell. Participants averaged 70% pass rate on the state certification exams. Students who become certified and licensed are able to obtain jobs in their communities as pesticide applicators or consultants.

All of the winter educational programs offered by University of Idaho Extension and collaborators in southwestern Idaho are well attended. Producers and pesticide applicators have demonstrated an increase in knowledge in topics from new crop production practices, pest management tactics, and pesticide safety and best application practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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