Grain producers gain insight from summer field days

**AT A GLANCE**

Grain producers learn about 2017 grain-variety trials and production information while attending field days in eastern Idaho.

**The Situation**

Growers in Madison, Caribou and Fremont counties need access to current and reliable research, production and marketing information. Always interested in learning ways to save money or increase the bottom line, these producers attend local field days to gain education that has potential to improve their farming practices and to learn efficient crop-production practices, reducing cost and increasing profit. In addition, these summer cereal field days present new varieties, information on disease or pest outbreaks, and best-management practices taught to them by University of Idaho Extension educators and specialists.

**Our Response**

Area Cereals Extension Educator Jonathon Hogge has been conducting crop production and management programs in these counties. In coordination with state specialists in plant pathology, entomology, barley production and cropping, he hosted cereal-crop field days for growers in Ashton and in Grace. Both Hogge and state specialists presented variety research, disease and insect control, cereal-marketing situations, and the outlook for all wheat classes.

**Program Outcomes**

A total of 87 people participated in two field days in Grace, and Ashton, in 2017. Of the total participants, 15 of them were farm owners and the remaining were farm workers. Five participants were female. Only the farm owners completed and returned the end-of-session evaluation survey, as they are the ones responsible to make the decisions to implement a practice on their farm that they learned. The survey participants reported statistically significant changes in their knowledge after the program in the areas of disease and insect damage, wheat-variety selection and cereal-market situations. The difference in the pre- and post-test knowledge was analyzed by using the Wilcoxon
Signed-Rank Test (W). The test showed that \( W_{\text{statistic}} > W_{\text{critical}} \) (upper value); \([W_{\text{statistic}} (n = 14, \alpha = 0.05) = 105, \text{against } W_{\text{critical}} = 80]\). This means the programs made significant positive difference in the knowledge of the survey respondents.

Growers reported some practices they were going to implement in their farms as a result of their participation in the field day were: closer scouting of fields to watch for pests, using appropriate insecticide in correct doses to control insects, growing new varieties of wheat that has a premium, using different irrigation practices, applying fertilizer at appropriate times and researching cereal markets using various sources.

Growers also reported a possible estimated increase in their income from program participation. Ten growers with a total of 35,400 accumulated acres reported possible increased income of $828,000 as a result of the practices they were going to implement (see Table 1). This accounts for an average estimated increase in income of $23/acre (range $20-$40/acre).

The Future

University of Idaho Extension will continue to partner with industry in conducting field days that provide the most up-to-date research, production and marketing information. Our goal is to increase producers’ knowledge so they change production practices, thus saving them money and increasing income.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The University of Idaho Extension partnered with Scoular Grain for the Soda Springs field day. Scoular was instrumental in inviting producers, speaking on grain marketing, preparing fields for visitors and sponsoring lunch for all the attendees for the four-hour field day. This partnership ensured UI Extension could bring the most up-to-date information in cereal production to growers in eastern Idaho.

Table 1. Estimated possible increase in growers’ farm income.