Annual pesticide training offers needed education for upper valley producers

AT A GLANCE
Pesticide applicators in the upper valley region receive current information on pesticide safety, efficacy and usage, while also obtaining pesticide education credits to maintain their state licensure.

The Situation
Agriculture and the commercial horticulture industry are important employers in the upper Snake River valley. A critical aspect of both these industries is the proper, safe and judicious application of pesticides on the farm, ranch or home landscape. Many times this current or new information is difficult to find. Employers especially can struggle with staying up to date with current information, but also identifying what information is research-based and what is not. It is critical that people who handle and apply chemical pesticides receive research based and current information to help protect themselves, the community and the end product user of whatever is having chemicals applied to it.

Our Response
Since 2016, University of Idaho Extension in Fremont County has offered annual pesticide applicator seminars. These educational events have been geared toward agriculture and commercial landscape applicators. The topics taught at this event have been varied and cover a wide-range of issues facing applicators in the area. Topics in 2017 included: Measuring Pesticides for Best Performance, Agricultural Health Study, Avoiding Pesticide Drift with Adjuvants and Three Common Weed Problems. In 2016 topics included Personal Protective Equipment Choices for Your Application, Pesticide Stewardship, Water Quality and How it Impacts your Pesticide Performance, Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency Updates on Pesticide Issues. These events were held at Fremont County’s UI Extension office in Saint Anthony. Presenters at these events were Sherman Takatori from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and Ronda Hirnyck with University of Idaho Extension.

Program Outcomes
Attendance at this event has averaged 45 to 55 chemical applicators per year. When surveyed after attending this event, 61 percent of the attendees reported...
that the quality of the education was very good and 39 percent rated it as excellent. In 2016 attendees rated the class, “Water Quality and How It Impacts your Pesticide Performance” as the most relevant class to them. Some indicated that until this class they had paid little attention to water pH and how it reacts with chemicals being applied or that they didn’t understand how it reacts with it. They also responded that a good refresher on using personal protective equipment was important, as well as how to get the most effectiveness out of the sprays they are using. In 2017 the attendees responded that they learned about dermal absorption rates of chemicals on the skin depending upon where it is on the body, measuring chemicals properly, how measurements vary, managing difficult weeds and chronic toxicity of chemicals over the lifetime. Some of the challenges faced by applicators include trying to understand and follow chemical labels accurately, record keeping, worker protection and safety laws, training employees, timing application of chemicals, preventing drift and applying chemicals for maximum effectiveness with least waste.

The Future

The upper valley pesticide applicator seminars will continue to be held in Fremont County, offering research based information to chemical producers for the surrounding area. Based on applicator requests, the future topics at these seminars will include more information focusing on worker protection standards, proper record keeping, preventing chemical drift, updates on controversies surrounding glyphosate products, reducing health hazards to people and pets, timing application and properly interpreting chemical labels.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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