

impact

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New Pest Friends' website helps pest managers thrive

AT A GLANCE

The new Pest Friends' website makes the board game more accessible to educators, helping them reach more learners and change their mindset in regard to pest management.

The Situation

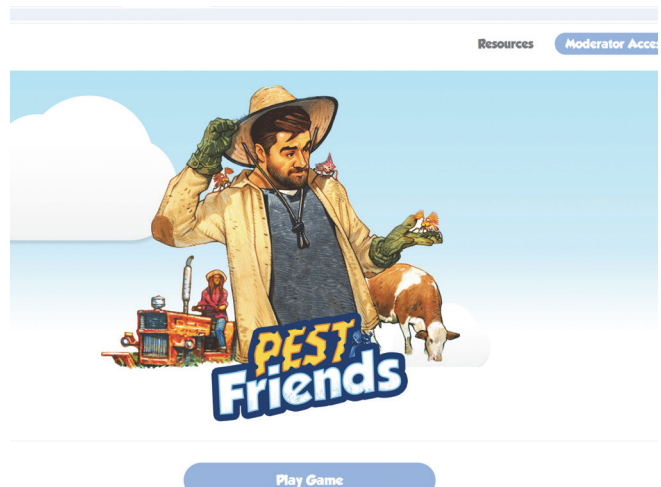
Pest management is a critical aspect of agricultural sustainability, yet conventional practices often result in overreliance on pesticides, leading to environmental harm and economic losses. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles offer a more sustainable approach but implementing them effectively can be challenging.

Pest Friends addresses this challenge by providing an engaging educational tool in the form of a board game. Designed to simulate real-world pest management scenarios, Pest Friends allows players to explore IPM principles and make informed decisions to mitigate pest damage while minimizing environmental impact.

However, despite its potential educational value, many educators expressed concerns about the complexity of moderating or running the game. They found the process challenging due to its mathematical components and multiple processes involved.

Our Response

In response to concerns raised by educators regarding the complexity of moderating the Pest Friends board game, PestFriends.org was developed using the University of Idaho Research Computing and Data



A cover image of the newly released Pest Friends' website. This digital version allows more people to play.

Services. This website aims to simplify the process by offering a moderator tool specifically designed to guide facilitators through the game, making it more accessible and user-friendly for educators. The website tells moderators what to do turn by turn as players make decisions. Additionally, a free digital version of the board game available on the website enhances usability and effectiveness in pest management education, allowing users to engage with the educational content more flexibly.

To prove the game is still relevant, in early 2024, we conducted a survey among 47 players, predominantly attending pesticide recertification classes, to gauge the impact of the Pest Friends board game on their mindset regarding pest management. Ninety-eight percent

indicated the game provided a positive change in their pest management mindset. Respondents were asked about how their mindset changed. The responses were analyzed thematically, revealing significant shifts in mindset and planned implementations (See Table).

# of Mentions	Principle/Mindset Change
26	It is important to depend on scouting and research information to guide pest management decisions
11	It is important to be mindful and prudent with pesticide usage
10	It is important to consider cultural control options for pest management
10	It is important to find ways to support and understand predators and biological control
7	It is important to time pest management decisions
6	It is important to think carefully about your choices, as everything you do in a field can have a consequence
4	When dealing with pests you should investigate all your options
2	It is important to think ahead and be preventative
2	It is important to read pesticide labels carefully
2	It is important to be cognizant of pesticide resistance and problems it can bring

These findings suggest that the game is effectively promoting sustainable pest management practices, leading to economic and environmental benefits. Pest managers are increasingly prioritizing informed decision-making, reduced pesticide usage and embracing multifaceted approaches to pest management, ensuring long-term resilience amidst evolving pesticide regulations and environmental challenges.

In terms of use, we already have over 20 educators from around the nation using the website. These educators have taught over 500 individuals since launch. The feedback from educators who have used the tool has been very positive. So far over 1,300 individuals have played the game.

The Future

We continue to develop expansions for the board game including an events expansion that increase replayability, a weed expansion integrating weed management principles and a translation of the base game into Spanish.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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