

2009 Annual Accomplishment Report
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PROGRAM TITLE:

Crop Production Management

SITUATION STATEMENT:

Grain production is a significant part of both Jefferson and Columbia County agricultural makeup. Grain production accounts for roughly 25% of the \$209 million of agricultural products produced annually in Jefferson County and greater than 40% of the \$166 million of agricultural products produced in Columbia County (2007 Census of Agriculture).

In addition to grain production, Jefferson County also has over 27,000 acres of forage production that is primarily used to feed over 40,000 beef and dairy cattle in the county. Columbia County uses the majority of its 37,000+ acres of forage as feed for over 53,000 beef and dairy cattle in the county.

In order to maintain high grain and forage production, growers in Jefferson and Columbia Counties have to adapt to the changes in crop production practices and management to stay profitable. Crop production management education in Jefferson and Columbia County focuses on three different areas: corn management, soybean management, and integrated pest management for all field crops.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES:

1. Farmers will increase their knowledge of new production practices to increase profitability in their cropping enterprise.
2. Farmers and agri-business professionals will increase their knowledge about pest management practices to minimize the impact of pests, prevent pest resistance, and eliminating unnecessary pesticide applications.

RESPONSE/ACTIVITIES:

First Quarter: (January – March)

1. Hosted Agronomy Update meeting with topics including corn, soybeans, small grains, and alfalfa management (21 attendees).
2. Hosted the last five Crop Decisions webinar meetings. I provided additional information at the local site in the areas of weed management and disease management in corn and soybeans (14 total attendees).
3. Coordinated and taught Pesticide Applicator Training at three locations (71 attendees).
4. Gathered and wrote articles for the Jefferson County *From the Ground Up* newsletter

Second Quarter: (April – June)

1. Collaborated with the Land and Water Conservation offices from Columbia and Dodge Counties to offer pasture walks (19 attendees).

2. Collaborated with local farmer to evaluate the effectiveness of preemergence herbicides in soybeans.

Third Quarter: (July – September)

1. Collaborated with the Land and Water Conservation offices from Columbia and Dodge Counties to offer pasture walks (86 attendees).
2. Wrote article about soybean aphid management for the Wisconsin Agriculturist Magazine.
3. Monitored and reported pest issues via state reporting systems, local media outlets, and UW-Extension newsletters.
4. Coordinated Columbia County Corn Growers summer meeting with officer team (58 attendees).
5. Collaborates with local farmer to evaluate the effectiveness of foliar fungicides on corn grain production.

Fourth Quarter: (October – December)

1. Collaborated with the Land and Water Conservation offices from Columbia and Dodge Counties to offer pasture walks (15 attendees).
2. Host Pest Management Update Meeting with topics including weed, insect, and disease management in corn, soybeans, winter wheat, and alfalfa (63 attendees).
3. Assisted in the coordination of the Harvest, Storage, and Feed Management Considerations webinar that was broadcasted to 244 participants at 61 locations.

Year Round:

1. Gathered and wrote articles for the Columbia County Ag Reporter UW-Extension monthly newsletter (April- December).
2. Completed radio and newspaper interviews and news releases as opportunities and needs arose.

Success Story:

Team Grains: Responding to the Difficult 2009 Crop Harvest

Situation: The 2009 cropping season was one of the most difficult in years. A wet spring combined with the coldest summer in the past 60 years created challenges throughout the fall. As a result of the weather problems, corn and soybean development was delayed. Frequent rain in September and October delayed the harvest even more.

When the killing frost hit Wisconsin, the majority of the corn in the state was not mature. The combination of immature corn and a rainy fall led to mold developing on the corn. These problems not only created an issue during harvest, but also during storage and feeding.

Rain throughout the fall also prevented soybeans from drying down. An extremely slow harvest was only part of the challenge for the soybean harvest. In addition to rarely get in the field in October; when farmers did harvest their soybeans, often times they had to add the extra step of

mechanically drying their soybeans. This unexpected step not only delayed the harvest further, but also made the crop less profitable.

Response: At the ANRE Conference on October 22-24, Team Grains (TG) members discussed the challenges of the delayed harvest, which at that point had barely started. Within one week of the conference the TG website, managed by Joe Bollman, was updated with resources to help with: drying soybeans, combine adjustments, corn mold ID, feeding moldy corn, prioritizing fall tillage, and the risk of leaving corn stand throughout the winter. UWEX acknowledges that there can be a time delay from the time a written resource is finished until it becomes available to farmers. UWEX recognized the time sensitivity of this information and held one of the most popular webinars ever hosted by UWEX.

On November 6th, a webinar titled “Harvest, Storage, and Feed Management Considerations” was hosted that addressed the wet corn/soybeans, combine setup recommendations, mold/mycotoxin development, and feeding corn that contain mycotoxins. The webinar, organized by TG members Mike Ballweg and Jim Leverich, tapped into resources from county agriculture agents (Nick Schneider) and the UW departments of agronomy (Shawn Conley, Joe Lauer), biological systems engineering (Matthew Digman), dairy science (Randy Shaver, Pat Hoffman), and plant pathology (Paul Esker). The webinar was archived on YouTube where producers could access the information at a later date.

Results: Within two weeks, nearly 20 articles were written by UWEX agents and specialists dealing with the harvest challenges. In addition to these articles, 244 participants from 61 locations participated in the “Harvest, Storage, and Feed Management Considerations” webinar. Many of the 244 webinar participants were crop consultants and dairy nutritionists who were able to take the information presented in this webinar and apply it farms and farmers that were not able to be a part of the webinar. Of the 101 participants that evaluated the webinar:

- 99% said they found the webinar moderately to extremely useful.
- 98% said they would be able to apply the information for the webinar to their work.
- 92% said that the webinar was an effective method for delivering timely information.

In addition to the webinar attendees, 450+ views of the webinar were made via YouTube in two months.

The 2009 harvest was one of the most difficult in decades. The webinar disseminated information throughout the state faster than any other delivery method. Being able to access the archive of this webinar allowed farmers, ag professionals, and UWEX agents the opportunity to access the information so that it can be used to better manage the harvest for all farms, rather than just the ones that were present for the webinar. The collection of resources developed by UWEX answered a variety of concerns so farmers could find the information they needed while continuing their harvest.

PROGRAM TITLE:

Soil and Nutrient Management

SITUATION STATEMENT:

Nutrient management has been a growing concern for farmers the past couple of years. Limitations on the volume applied along with restrictions on when and where manure can be applied has caused producers to reevaluate their manure spreading strategy. As dairy farms continue to increase in size, scrutiny from the public has made manure management one of the most regulated parts of a farming operation.

In addition to manure management challenges, fertilizer management has also been under the radar the past couple of years. The 2008 crop was the most expensive ever planted, mainly because of record high fertilizer prices. With the continued economic challenges that farmers are facing, growers have to decide if it would be economical to reduce or eliminate fertilizer applications throughout their entire cropping system or continue their current fertilization strategy.

Farmers have also increased their attention to soil management. The first major change in soil management happened decades ago when farmers switched from moldboard plowing to chisel plowing in an effort to reduce soil loss. Now farmers are taking the next steps in soil management. They are evaluating how much tillage is needed for their farms, changing farm operations to limit compaction, and using precision technologies to efficiently and effectively manage their fields. All of these efforts are being made to improve the financial situation of their farming operation.

Needs assessments in both Jefferson and Columbia Counties showed the need for nutrient management programming in each county. The top areas within nutrient management decided by farmers included: 1) Soil Fertility; 2) Manure Management; and 3) Soil Management.

OUTCOMES:

1. Farmers will increase their knowledge about and implement nutrient management plans.
2. Farmers will increase their knowledge of fertilizer management to reduce their use of fertilizer or use their fertilizer in a more economic way.
3. Farmers will increase their knowledge about different soil management strategies to enhance soil quality characteristics.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Third Quarter: (July – September)

1. Wrote scripts for the general farm and manure management tours at Farm Technology Days.

Fourth Quarter: (October – December)

1. Collaborated with UWEX specialists, Columbia County Land and Water Conservation, and the WI DNR to host a manure spill response demonstration (49 attendees).
2. Wrote a soil compaction article as a part of the “Responding to a Difficult Harvest” initiative that Team Grains organized.

Year Round:

1. Gathered and wrote articles for the Columbia County Ag Reporter UW-Extension (two issues).
2. Completed radio and newspaper interviews and news releases as opportunities and needs arise.
3. Visited farms on an as-needed basis and also continue to meet producers in the county.

Success Story:

Farm Technology Days Farm Tours: A Great Farm with Popular Farm Tours

Situation

Not all farms are created equal in the state of Wisconsin. One of the most advanced and innovative farms in the state was on display for the 2009 Farm Technology Days (FTD) in Dodge County. Crave Brothers Farm is home to 1700 cattle, 1700 acres of cropland, a manure digester, and a cheese making facility that produces award winning cheeses.

Historically, FTD shows expect 3,000-4,000 farm tour riders over the course of three days. With the unique characteristics of the farm along with its proximity to Madison and Milwaukee, the expectations for the farm tour were much higher. The only question was how many people to plan for. Estimates prior to the show ranged from 5,000 people to the host family’s goal of having all attendees take a farm tour. In addition to a general farm tour that gave an overview of the entire farm, a second tour that focused on manure management was given in an effort to highlight the manure digester and other manure management strategies on the farm.

Another challenge in planning for this many people is that we did not know how many trams were needed to efficiently move attendees through the lines. With this uncertainty it was difficult to allocate too many trams for farm tours considering there are a limited number of trams available for the show and they are also needed for other parts of the show. With that in mind, 10 trams were allocated for farm tours at the start of the show. With 10 trams running steady for three days, about 15,000 attendees would be able to take a farm tour.

On each tram there would be a “Farm Tour Presenter” (FTP) who would describe the characteristics of the farm as they passed through the farmstead. These presenters were provided a script that provided details of the farm that the host family wanted to highlight. As with any show of this size, finding enough volunteers to work each committee was a challenge. And farm tours were no exception.

The last challenge that would have to be dealt with was the rain. Each day rain effected parts of the FTD show, including the farm tours. Planning for rain is something all committees do prior to the show but the challenge in planning for rain is adjusting to how much rain is falling and what time of the day it occurs at.

Results

Farm tours were the highlight of the show. Two hours into the show, the lines for the tours were an hour long because of the popularity. Myself working with the executive committee called on local school buses to aid in the tours. These buses would end up being used all three days to assist with the farm tours.

Rain each day created logistical challenges for all parts of the show including farms tours. These rains significantly reduced the farm equipment demonstrations that could be conducted. While unfortunate for that part of the show, the extra trams from farm equipment demonstrations were invaluable to keep lines at a minimum on the farm tours. At the peak of the farm tours, 23 trams and buses were giving tours. This obviously led to a shortage of “Farm Tour Presenters”. Because of a shortage of FTPs volunteers from other FTD committees helped out with farm tours. Members of at least 5 other committees served as FTPs in an effort to keep lines manageable for farm tours.

Because of the planning prior to the show of multiple committees along with the effort by 100+ volunteers, over 30,000 attendees were able to take a farm tour. While not all parts of the show went as planned, farm tours exceeded nearly all expectations. Tour goers were very pleased with the tours and were impressed at the efficiency that tours were conducted at.

A great farm in combination with good planning and the work of amazing volunteers made the farm tours at the 2009 Farm Technology Days the most popular farm tour that has ever been taken at a Farm Technology/Progress Days.

OTHER TEACHING:

Savor and Sample Fest, which was a local foods event was coordinated by UW-Extension Columbia County Agriculture, CRD and WNEP Agents. The event highlighted local foods in the Columbia County area along with providing educational opportunities for attendees. Approximately 450 people attended.

Farm accident rescue training continued to be held in Jefferson County and was introduced to Columbia County. Three locations totaled 73 EMS responders who received training in responding to an agricultural accident.