The Situation
Southwest Idaho’s Treasure Valley spans several county borders and crosses the Idaho border into eastern Oregon. This valley contains one of the largest contiguous irrigated agricultural production regions in the Northwest. Irrigation projects support a diversified production, processing and marketing economy with dozens of crops. In 2000, the farmgate value of crop production in Canyon County was approximately $311 million. In 2002 the farmgate value of crop production in Malheur County, Oregon was $90 million. Adding the gross income of commodities produced in the adjacent counties of Owyhee, Payette and Washington pushes the direct farmgate value of this industry to nearly $600 million dollars annually.

A wide range of economically important disease, insect, and noxious weed pests exist within this complex agro-ecosystem. Pest management and crop protection issues are extremely important from economic, environmental and human health perspectives. Based on University of Idaho Enterprise Budget Sheets, on average 15 to 20 percent of the cost of production of Treasure Valley crops are taken up by pest control inputs. These inputs include pesticides, custom applications, and management overhead amounting to tens of millions of dollars annually. Pest control applications are most beneficial when used in a timely fashion. Issues of environmental protection, applicator and farm worker safety, and reduced input costs created a critical need for an improved area-wide information network to support integrated pest management practices.

Our Response
It is difficult to rapidly disperse pest outbreak information over a wide geographic region such as the Treasure Valley. Knowledge of current pest condition information is usually scattered among growers and crop professionals. An interactive Internet-based site called TVPestAlert.net was developed by University of Idaho and Oregon State University Cooperative Extension System faculty members to deliver timely crop pest information across the Treasure Valley.

The website is designed to receive information from growers, field representative, or other subscriber by e-mail, fax, or telephone. Submissions are verified by University of Idaho or Oregon State University Cooperative Extension faculty before posting to the web site. An e-mail notice is automatically sent to all subscribers who are interested in the affected crop. The e-mail identifies the crop and pest, and where to obtain the alert. Alerts are automatically linked to research based pest identification, life cycle, IPM, and control information on the web.

The Treasure Valley Pest Alert Network is an innovative IPM tool designed to increase communication and improve management decisions when pest outbreaks arise in the Treasure Valley. Growers benefit from timely and accurate information on the occurrence of pest outbreaks and
appropriate control measures. Without timely
information, crop losses can occur. One strategy to
minimize losses from pests is to apply pesticides
whether they are needed or not. While blanket
applications of pesticides or even organic controls
can be effective for pests that occur every year, they
are not cost effective for many pests that irregularly
reach economic thresholds. Crop yield, quality and
environmental benefits are assured and input costs
minimized through timely pest control information.

**Program Outcomes**

In 2002 there were 8,975 site visits, 213 subscribers
and 51 pest alerts were posted to the website. A
post-season evaluation shows that 38.3 percent of
the subscribers are farmers, 35.0 percent are field
representatives, 20.0 percent are government and 6.7
percent have other occupations. The primary crops
grown by the website subscribers are small grains,
onions, corn, sugarbeets, forages, alfalfa seed,
potatoes and peppermint. Alerts posted in 2002
included both primary and secondary insect and
disease pests of the above mentioned crops.

In an end of the year evaluation, 100 percent of
survey respondents said the website was useful to
their organization. On a Lickert scale of 1 to 5,
usefulness averaged a score of 4.1. Following are
comments from the evaluation:

- “I used it (TVPestAlert.net) to assist the crop
  advisors in watching what pests were coming
  into our area. I know the hatch information was
  of particular interest to the crop advisors and
growers when they were trying to time spray
  applications.” (Simplot Company Field
  Representative)

- “Made me more alert to the possible danger of a
certain pest or disease. I didn't have any major
pest problems because through pest alert I
captured them in time.” (Grower)

- The alfalfa seed, corn, onion and sugarbeet pest
  notifications helped me decide when to scout my
  fields and helped me to improve the accuracy
  and timing of my pesticide applications.”
  (Grower)

The web site has achieved many the objectives for
which it was designed. In a large diversified
agricultural production area it has established a
growing network of professional subscribers actively
reporting and receiving pest outbreak information.
TVPestAlert.net has improved the efficiency of
scouting by giving growers and field representatives
a rapid "heads up" on pest outbreaks. As evidenced
by subscribers’ comments, it has also improved
timely and efficacious use of pesticides and in some
cases reduced or prevented ineffective pesticide use.
In addition, the resource pages give clients current
and accurate pest specific IPM information.

**Future**

Operation of the website will continue during the
2003 field season. In 2003 a concentrated effort will
be made to expand website services to tree fruit.

**Cooperators**

Steve Reddy; UI Washington County Ext. Educator
Brad Geary, UI Potato/Onion Specialist
Tim Davis, UI Payette County Ext. Educator
Ben Simko, OSU Malheur County Ext. Agent
Lynn Jensen, OSU Onion/Potato Specialist
Clint Shock, OSU Malheur Exp. Station Supt.

**For More Information**

Jerry Neufeld, Extension Educator
Canyon County Extension
University of Idaho
501 Main Street
Caldwell, Idaho 83605
208-459-6003
Fax: 208-454-6349
Email: jerryn@uidaho.edu

32-03jneufeld-outbreaks.doc
11/03