

IMPACT

 University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Valley County Landowners Control Grasshoppers Through Baiting Program

The Situation

The conditions in many parts of Idaho during the summer of 2000 made it possible for grasshopper populations to expand very rapidly. A mild winter followed by a hot, dry summer made the possibility of a grasshopper population explosion a reality. By June, the rains had ended in Valley County and when the long warm days appeared so did the grasshoppers. In some parts of the county, when the grasshoppers were “marching” they made a swath several yards wide and hundreds of feet long. It was quickly becoming evident that the grasshoppers were competing with cattle on the dry land pastures. With over 50% of the county’s pastures in dry land, the potential forage loss was great.

Our Response

When the residents of the Valley began to notice grasshoppers by the thousands in their pastures and fields, they contacted the County Extension office to look for help. Most residents wanted to look at spraying programs to control the grasshoppers, but because of the vast number of lakes, streams, and wetlands in the area, wide spread chemical controls were not feasible.

We inquired about solutions used in other counties. The baiting program sponsored by the USDA was selected as a low cost program that would not harm livestock or water systems. By working with the Adams County Extension office, Valley County was able to make contact with Rob McChesney, a Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer with the USDA.



Since Valley County was not on the list of counties with potential grasshopper problems, McChesney made the trip to Valley County to estimate the number of grasshoppers to determine if indeed a problem did exist. After stopping at the first dry pasture, it was determined that Valley County was over the threshold of eight grasshoppers per square yard. Of the total valley area, it was determined that 30,000 acres were infested. One ton of the rolled wheat and Sevin bait was determined to be the starting amount, as the baiting program had not taken place in Valley County, and it was unsure how the program would be accepted. In total, 16 tons of bait were delivered to Valley County and 14 tons were given out free of charge to county residents.

Achievements

In total 110 residents received bait and spread it over 17,881.6 acres. Surveys were sent to each participant to find out their success, and to determine if and why some were more successful than others.

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Of the 110 participants, 58 returned their surveys. From the surveys, 87% indicated that they would participate in the program again, 8% percent indicated they would not participate in the program again, 5% decided not to apply the bait for various reasons, and 3% were not sure if they would participate in the program again.

The Future

Starting early in the spring of 2001, scouting efforts will take place to determine where the nymphs will likely begin to emerge. Remaining bait stocks are on hand along with bait applicators so that when necessary, baiting may resume with no time lost for acquiring the necessary materials and equipment. Gary McNeal with USDA-APHIS indicated that 50,000 pounds of the wheat bait are in stock and the State of Idaho is currently seeking funding to continue the effort next summer. Funding will depend in part on the severity of the problem next summer.

For More Information

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