

IMPACT

 University of Idaho
Cooperative
Extension System

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Nutrient Management for Dairy Producers

The Situation

Recent legislation was passed which required all dairy operations to have submitted a Certified Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) by July 2001. By mid spring of 2001 less than one-fourth of the dairies in the state had submitted their nutrient management plans. The Idaho State Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the University of Idaho and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, had provided the necessary training to over 300 individuals to become certified nutrient management planners. Even though a large number of individuals had been trained, a relatively small number of less than 30 individuals had completed the necessary two plans to become certified.

With the small number of planners who had become certified, it became apparent that a concentrated effort would be necessary to insure that all of the required plans would be submitted by the July 1 deadline.

It appeared that the industry and the Idaho State Department of Agriculture would need assistance if the deadline were to be met. The University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System accepted the challenge to assist.

Our Response

U of I developed priorities for involvement in the nutrient management planning process. The priorities for working with dairymen were as follows: 1) efforts focused first on helping producers

collect the necessary information from which a plan could be developed; 2) second on assisting producers who attended workshops on how to collect the data in completing their plans; 3) third on assisting those producers who did not attend the workshops to develop a plan if they collected the necessary data for developing a plan; and, 4) fourth, providing assistance to other producers, if time allowed. In addition to the workshops and assistance for producers, the Extension System provided training for planners on the use of the "OnePlan" software for developing nutrient management plans. The software increases the ease and accuracy of developing nutrient management plans and decreases the time involved in developing plans. The software became available in June and planners needed to be trained in the operation of the software before using it to develop plans.

To meet the challenge of completing the plans within the timeframe, five county Extension Educators, one Water Quality Educator and one Dairy Specialist collaborated on designing a series of nine workshops to train producers on what data to collect and how to collect the data from which their plans could be developed.

Upon completion of the workshops and the data collection by the producers, Extension faculty assisted in the completion of 97 plans across the state.

Two Idaho OnePlan Software Training Workshops trained 12 Certified Nutrient Management Planners

and four University of Idaho Extension System county and specialist faculty.

Program Outcomes

By July 1, 2001, which was the deadline for submission of a nutrient management plan for each of Idaho's 870 dairies, all but one producer had submitted plans to the Idaho State Department of Agriculture. Nearly 140 producers received assistance in collection of the data needed to prepare their nutrient management plans. A total of 97 plans were completed by University of Idaho Extension faculty using the information, which was collected by the dairymen based on the instruction they received from University of Idaho Extension faculty.

Considering that 400 cows is an average-sized dairy, the potential loss of milk sales would be just over \$2,700 per day, based on 57 lbs of milk per cow per day at \$12.00 per cwt of milk. If the 97 producers who received assistance would have failed to meet the deadline and would have been closed down, the loss would have been \$265,392 per day, assuming the 97 herds were of average size.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The success of the assistance program that was implemented to assist producers in the completion of their nutrient management plans was due to the commitment of the University of Idaho Extension faculty and collaboration with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and the United Dairymen of Idaho.

The Future

Now that nutrient management plans have been submitted, there will be an ongoing need to educate producers on how to implement, monitor or evaluate the plans. Many producers have a plan but do not fully understand what it means or how to "fine tune" their plans to maximize their operations. Additionally, the current plans are largely based on the "book values" for manure and for crop nutrient uptake. As many of the book values are based on data that are decades old, values being used must be validated or modified according to current feeding, cropping practices and manure management.

For More Information

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