

IMPACT



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Hot Off the Press: North-Central Idaho Residents Learn About Agriculture

The Situation

In August, 2003, Ken Hart, Lewis/Idaho County Extension Educator, was reading the Ag Page of the Lewiston Morning Tribune. Sure, the articles were well-written and interesting. But little of the information pertained directly to the north-central Idaho region. Frustration with the lack of regional information pointed to an opportunity for land-grant university personnel to provide current, research-based information to the citizens of the north-central Idaho region through the Ag Page of the Lewiston Morning Tribune.

Our Response

Jeanne DePaul, Lewiston Morning Tribune editor, was very pleased with the idea that a team of authors from the University of Idaho (UI) and Washington State University (WSU) become regular contributors to the Ag Page. Jeanne worked with Ken to design editorial guidelines for the new Extension column team. The columnists were nine Extension Educators and Specialists from UI and WSU, drawing from a large and diverse research base represented by the work of these two universities. From mid-September, 2003, until the present, these columns have appeared on the Monday morning Ag Page. Thirteen Extension personnel have worked on the team at various times. As of January 1, 2007, these Extension authors have written 165 columns covering livestock, crops, farm management, soils, insects, diseases, weeds and more. This represents about 650 faculty work hours on this project. Columns average about 700 words each, and

pictures and/or graphs that support the columns are encouraged. An average circulation of 24,000 Lewiston Morning Tribune papers means that about 2,772,000,000 words have been printed through this project without cost to the universities except staff time. That's a lot of fodder, to coin an agricultural term.

Program Outcomes

This program has been very successful. A wide variety of subjects of immediate and educational interest have been covered. Lewiston Morning Tribune editors have been happy with the columns written in personal information style, allowing each author to have an individual style and tone reflected in their work. All columns are agriculture-related, original, and are aligned with Extension's mission.

Each column includes email contact information for the author. Team members report contacts for additional information from nearly every column they write.

An informal survey of Camas Prairie area residents found that 87% at least occasionally read the Ag Page of the Lewiston Morning Tribune, and 44% indicated they read it often or always. All of the readers of the Ag Page found it at least occasionally useful, while 38% of the readers found it often or always useful.

The Future

The commitment of the extension educators and specialists who make up this team of agricultural

column authors is impressive. All of these people are very busy working in their academic disciplines and geographic areas. Yet many have expressed how much they value the opportunity to write for such a large and diverse audience as the readers of the Ag Page of the Lewiston Morning Tribune. Authors sometime change due to changing assignments or employment. We try to have authors who can address topics across the spectrum of disciplines represented in north-central Idaho agriculture. The partnership between the Lewiston Morning Tribune and the University of Idaho and Washington State University Extension is positive and fresh. The future is bright for more agriculture columns to relate north-central Idaho specific agricultural information to citizens of this area.

For More Information

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