



Recertification trainings lead to behavioral changes of pesticide applicators

The Situation

Private and professional pesticide applicators are required to maintain their certification credentials by attending annual pesticide applicator recertification trainings. The purpose of these trainings is to increase the knowledge of pesticide applicators in the use of pesticides. It is also expected that pesticide applicators will eliminate hazardous behaviors relating to pesticides and adopt safe behaviors.

Our Response

Extension Educators in Bannock, Bear Lake, Caribou, Franklin, and Oneida counties have organized a yearly pesticide applicator training. These trainings are offered in each of the above mentioned counties. This allows pesticide applicators to receive training closer to their place of business, and reduce travel time and costs associated with attending these types of trainings.

The trainings are developed to cover topics that are suited to southeastern Idaho, and the crops and pests that are located in that area. The recertification trainings are offered at no cost to the producers and provide three to four hours of recertification credits.

Each educator involved in the program is responsible for logistics and advertising in his own county. All educators teach one section of the program at each of the training sites.

Program Outcomes

Pesticide applicators have for the past eleven years had the opportunity to receive training in the proper and safe use of pesticides through the University of Idaho Extension's pesticide applicator recertification trainings. Some 1,683 participants have received recertification credits since 1998.

Although increases in knowledge have been regularly documented each year, no study or survey, up to this time, has attempted to determine if program participants modify their behavior by adopting safer and more acceptable procedures related to pesticide application.

During the 2008 trainings, all participants were surveyed to determine if they have changed their behaviors in a positive way due to past participation in the pesticide applicator trainings. The students were asked to rate how much they have modified their behavior on a scale from 1 to 10. One representing very little change in behavior, and ten representing a much larger change in behavior. The following five questions were asked:

- Do you take more safety precautions when using pesticides?
- Do you read the information contained on pesticide labels?
- Do you select the correct and legal pesticide for the application you are planning?
- Do you correctly identify problem weeds and insects prior to applying pesticides?
- How much do you rely on these pesticide applicator training classes for recertification credits?

Survey Results

Results of the survey showed that due to the recertification classes, students have taken steps to change their behavior in a positive direction in each area that was evaluated.

Students registered positive changes in their behavior in the area of pesticide safety at a level of 7.64 (on a scale of 1 to 10). Students also changed their behavior

in relation to reading safety labels as evidenced by a score of 7.85. The ratings for improvements in behavior in the areas of pesticide selection and identification of pests were 7.83 and 7.77 respectively.

The final question differed from the others, and referred to the value students placed on the class itself. It received a rating of 9.45, which was a higher value than any other question. The high value this question received demonstrates the value students place on these trainings for completing their recertification requirements.

The results show the positive influence recertification classes have on the behavior of students over the course of the past eleven years. Pesticide applicators can and do take more precautions with pesticides, use pesticides in a safer way, and use the correct pesticide for the job, if they are properly trained.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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