Roadside and range weed control seminars train professional applicators

The Situation
Pesticide recertification credits can be obtained at any number of classes or seminars, however, the topics covered are generally applicable to pesticide applicators who work in production agriculture. Professional applicators who work in non-agriculture areas were unable to attend classes and receive credits in areas that would enhance their knowledge about types of weed control specific to the areas they were treating.

These applicators work in the areas of noxious weed control, range weed management, and right-of-way vegetation management. Primarily they are employed by federal, state, or county governments though some private professional applicators do work in this area. Some of the applicators are hired seasonally. They do not have the opportunity to get training and credits in the off season and when actual application season begins they are too busy to attend meetings.

Our Response
In 2005 the Extension Educator met with the Jefferson and Clark County weed superintendents and members of the local Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) Advisory Boards to discuss the problem. They organized the first Roadside and Range Weed Control Seminar. It was held in Dubois, Idaho and it was a great success. This has become an annual event taking place in May after the seasonal workers have been hired but before the spraying season really begins.

The committee, consisting of the Extension Educator, local county weed superintendents, and CWMA advisors, meets to discuss issues and training needs then qualified instructors are invited from University of Idaho Extension, chemical companies, and government agencies. Lecture classes are held in the morning with hands-on learning activities being held outdoors in the afternoon.

Program Outcomes
Each year between 35 and 53 professional pesticide applicators attend. Eight hundred and twenty-five pesticide recertification credits have been issued to these participants. Since neighboring states do accept Idaho recertification credits for their applicators, there is class participation from Wyoming, and Montana as well as Idaho. They represent county weed departments, USFS, BLM, USFW, ISDA, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game, universities, private companies, and others.
Topics covered at the seminar have included:
- Noxious weed identification
- Pesticide safety
- Pesticide drift prevention
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies
- Biological weed control
- Animal grazing strategies to manage noxious weeds
- Revegetation principles
- Pesticide selection and application techniques
- Pesticide application equipment calibration, cleaning, and maintenance
- Training for ATV and horse pack pesticide application equipment for backcountry use
- ATV operator safety training
- Legal requirements for professional applicators
- GIS weed mapping training
- Demonstrations on cleaning vehicles to prevent noxious weed spread

Annual evaluations by participants show the quality of the program as follows:
- 98% agreed that the information shared met audience needs while 2% were neutral.
- 100% agreed that the seminar was well organized.
- 92% agreed that the seminar date and time was appropriate while 8% were neutral.
- 93% agreed that the speaker topics were relevant to their work while 7% were neutral.
- 98% agreed that the speakers encouraged questions and interaction with participants while 2% were neutral.
- 62% listed one or more ideas they planned to put into practice.

Some comments by seminar participants:
- “Seminar was well planned and was on schedule. Enjoyed it.”
- “Keep it up, I really appreciate having a seminar here in Dubois.”
- “Good seminar, enjoyed the outside seminar.”
- “Excellent workshop by all! Thanks!”
- “This would be great as an annual refresher.”
- “It was great, learned a lot.”
- “Very good speakers and subject matter.”
- “The seminar was very informational, lunch was great!”

The Future
The positive response from participants encourages the continuation of this seminar. The participant evaluations will guide future topic selection by program advisory committee.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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