

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

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## Cereal schools and tours offer relevant information for East Idaho grain producers

### The Situation

Eastern Idaho is a high grain production area. Commonly used as the main rotation crop between potatoes and alfalfa, grain production has become a more profitable commodity within the last 2 years. Conversely though during this time the cost of grain production has dramatically increased, specifically for the expense of fuel and fertilizer. Producers are continually looking for ways to offset these cost increases, improve sustainability, and maintain profits. To do this they are seeking information and management tools to achieve higher grain protein levels, improved grain varieties that offer better disease and pest resistance, and new cultural management practices.

### Our Response

The University of Idaho Extension annually hosts a series of day long cereal schools throughout the eastern half of the state. These schools are offered during the beginning of February in Ashton, Idaho Falls, Preston, Burley, and Pocatello. Topics are selected by a planning committee comprised of commodity group representatives, grain producers, extension educators, and extension specialists. The planning committee identifies grain producer educational needs and how the University can best address those needs through the grain schools, grain tours, or a peer reviewed cereal publication. Grain issues that have successful research based solutions that can be presented by a subject matter expert, become part of the current year's grain school agenda. In 2011 the cereal schools featured presentations covering weed management, protein level management, grain variety trial updates, commodity commission news, vole and gopher control, solutions to entomology problems, disease issues, and the potential green bridge



can play in conveying crop problems from one year to the next.

In addition to the information offered at cereal schools, tours of cereal plot trials are conducted in Ashton, Soda Springs, Burley, Idaho Falls Swan Valley, Ririe, and Aberdeen. These tours, attended by 20 to 50 grain producers and industry representatives, provide a hands on opportunity for the University of Idaho Extension to demonstrate grain variety success, new practice cultural management options, current diseases, and in season insect issues.

### Program Outcomes

Attendees were surveyed at the end of the 2011 cereal school and asked if they learned something new, what it was they learned, future topics they would like covered, if they attended a cereal tour, and what the University of Idaho Extension could do in the future to improve grain education.

- 97% of attendees responded that they learned something new by attending Cereal School in 2011.
- 79% of attendees responded that they can/will utilize the information gained from the Cereal School.
- Attendees specifically responded that they will utilize new information they learned in cereal production in the following areas:

87% learned and will utilize the information presented on grain cultural management and production practices.

83% of summer grain tour attendees found the information taught to be of value to them.

62% learned and will utilize the information presented on disease, pest, and weed control.

35% learned and will utilize the information presented on fertility management.

30% learned and will utilize the information presented on managing grain protein.

25% learned and will utilize new varieties of cereal grains.

23% Learned and will utilize the information presented on vole management.

- 100% of responding attendees who receive the Upper Snake River Grain Newsletter found the information it provides helps them in their grain production and crop management techniques.
- Attendees commented on the quality of the educational grain programming offered. These comments included: "Nice job pertaining to our area," "keep providing more of the same programming," "keep up the good quality of work," "I enjoy the grain variety information presented by Dr. Marshall," "and "the information you presented was very good and relevant."

### **The Future**

Cereal Schools and Tours will continue to be held throughout Eastern Idaho. Curriculum and topics will continue to be selected in cooperation with producers and association representatives at Cereal School planning meeting. With the continued support from producers and commodity associations, the Cereal School will be an integral asset to grain producers in Eastern Idaho.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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