

# IMPACT

University of Idaho  
Extension

**Boundary County**

208.267.3235, Fax: 208.267.3056

6447 Kootenai Street, Bonners Ferry, ID 83805

## North Idaho hay producers turn out for a “Forage School” in Bonners Ferry

### AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension educators and local agricultural agency officials present the latest research results and product information for hay growers in North Idaho.

### The Situation

Hay production is a major crop in North Idaho, with over 150,000 acres harvested in the 10-county region, according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Of this total, about one-third is alfalfa, with an average production of about 120,000 tons per year (USDA-NASS). In Boundary County, hay was produced on about one-third of the cropland, with an average yield of 2.51 tons per acre, according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. Alfalfa is produced on another 25% of the cropland, with an average yield of 2.71 tons per acre. Altogether, hay and alfalfa production comprise the largest use of cropland.

### Our Response

An educational program for North Idaho hay producers was created that featured University of Idaho Extension faculty with state-, district- and county-level appointments. Speakers from local and regional representatives from USDA-NRCS and Risk Management Education were also invited, as well as the local weed district superintendent and a local hay producer with experience in the export market. Continuing education credits were obtained for both pesticide recertification and certified crop advisors. Topics included soils and fertilization; hay varieties and variety trial results; timely use of cover crops for grazing or forage production; cost-share programs for cover crops; an update on the economics of hay production, including current hay and alfalfa budgets for north-



In Boundary County, forage production, including alfalfa and hay, together account for about half of cropland acreage

ern Idaho; new federal crop insurance programs for hay producers; noxious weed update, with a focus on ventenata; weed control in hay and pasture; insect pests and treatment protocols for hay and pasture, with a focus on the alfalfa weevil; and hay marketing updates, featuring a local grower’s experience with the export market. The program was held on Monday, November 2, from 8am to 5pm.

### Program Outcomes

The “hay school” was promoted in the local weekly newspaper and an online newspaper. Fliers were distributed at local businesses and through the Extension office. In addition, fliers were also mailed to a list of past attendees at pesticide recertification events. Fifty-eight people registered for the event, and 52 actually attended. Two local machinery dealerships were contacted for sponsorship of the lunch and coffee breaks. With this local support, the registration cost was minimal at \$5 per person. Attendees

included one of the local chemical company owner-applicators and our local NRCS district conservationist.

Attendees received handouts from the speakers as electronic copies of the presentations (converted to pdf format) and some additional resources, including relevant Extension Bulletins (also in pdf format) and 2015 enterprise budgets for hay and alfalfa production in northern Idaho (in both pdf and excel formats). These resources were provided on a thumb drive that was mailed to participants after the workshop. Initially we wanted to provide the thumb drives at the workshop, but several presenters were unable to provide their talks in advance, and the pesticide recertification credits were also unavailable in advance, thus these items were mailed to participants later that week. This additional contact was useful as a follow-up, as attendees had requested information on producing certified weed-free hay, and we were able to provide detailed information on this topic in the mailing.

Electronic “clickers” were provided to each participant in order to get immediate responses to questions such as whether they were familiar with crop insurance options for their farm. More general data were also collected, such as whether they had livestock on their farm (68% responded affirmatively), if they owned all their land (64% replied that they did) and whether they had written lease agreements (32% did not). Written participant evaluation forms were also solicited from attendees. Results showed that all either agreed or strongly agreed with the evaluation statements covering whether the information provided met their needs, whether it was clear and well organized, if the audio-visual and other teaching aids were appropriate, if the instructors were well informed and interesting, and whether questions and audience interaction were encouraged. Many growers commented they that were going to do some soil testing and try some cover crops.

### **The Future**

A number of the participants indicated that they would like an annual event focused on issues for hay producers. In order to bring this program to more participants in an efficient way, we will try to extend the “hay school” concept similarly to the cereal schools that are held in several locations throughout northern Idaho. One or more hay experts from outside the region could be featured in future events of this nature. Additional agricultural industry and agency representatives will be contacted for participation in the future.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**Kate Painter**, Extension Educator  
University of Idaho Extension, Boundary County  
PO Box 267  
6447 Kootenai Street  
Bonners Ferry, ID 83805  
Phone: 208.267.3235  
Fax: 208.267.3056  
E-mail: [kpainter@uidaho.edu](mailto:kpainter@uidaho.edu)

25-15kpainter-forage.pub  
12/15