

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Education with a focus on forages helps farmers in eastern Idaho

### AT A GLANCE

Forage producers were provided with tools and information to make their operations more productive across four locations in eastern Idaho.

### The Situation

Hay production is the highest acreage crop in Idaho, yet hay producers often see limited resources and research in their industry. Weeds, insects and diseases decrease production while increasing production costs, loss of markets and shortages continue to create challenges for forage producers. University of Idaho Extension is providing research and educational tools for forage producers across the state. Hay growers in eastern Idaho rely on the University of Idaho Extension to stay informed about current research in their industry.

### Our Response

Extension educators from University of Idaho organized programs at four locations across eastern Idaho (Mud Lake, Blackfoot, Soda Springs and Preston) to provide forage growers with information to improve their operations. Speakers were invited from around the region. Joseph Sagers presented on methods to combat weeds in alfalfa fields. Reed Findlay presented on common insects and diseases in alfalfa and how to properly respond to ongoing pest problems. Carmen Willmore gave a presentation about ongoing research with timing the harvest of annual forage crops. Ben Eborn gave an outlook for the hay market as well as advice about marketing hay. The final speaker was Dr.



Photo credit: Jon Hogge

Earl Creech from Utah State University who spoke about ongoing research with frost damage in Roundup Ready alfalfa.

Much of this information was new to these forage growers, and the survey results were very positive. The information presented has equipped farmers with the tools needed to improve operations.

### Program Outcomes

The UI Extension forage schools reached approximately 100 forage producers. Attendees who filled out surveys indicated that they collectively managed approximately 73,000 acres. Those who completed the survey were asked to indicate their understanding of each topic before and after the presentation on a scale

from one (very low understanding) to five (very high understanding) (see Figure 1). For each topic, participants had an increase of knowledge after the school compared to before the school. When participants were asked to list practices they planned to implement after the Forage School, they reported an intention to use practices taught such as the following examples:

- “I am going to start checking for pests in alfalfa, and I will pay more attention to what happens when I spray herbicides.”
- “I plan to spray Roundup Ready alfalfa at the 2-inch stage, and I will scout earlier for thrips and beneficial (insects) to determine future control methods.”
- “I will pay more attention to pests and diseases. I am going to plant some Italian rye in my pasture.”

### The Future

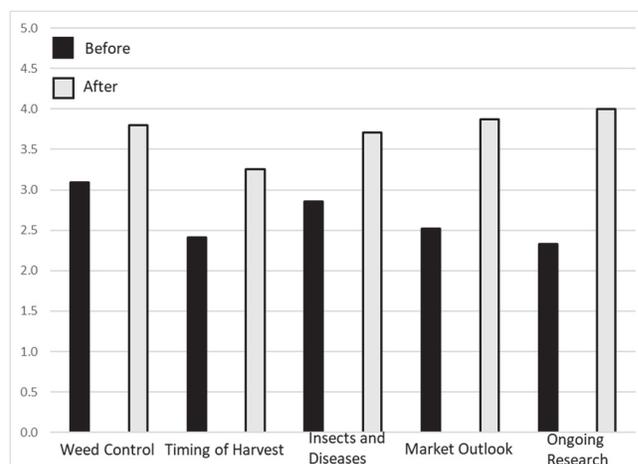
UI Extension forage schools will continue to be held on an annual basis with a focus on educating all producers. Participants were asked in the evaluation to list topics they would like to learn about in the future. Common themes were variety selection, technology, irrigation, pest management and alternative crops. UI Extension will assess which topics will be of most

importance for the following year and will continue to provide outreach and education for these underserved producers.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The forage schools were organized by University of Idaho Extension educators from various counties. Sponsors were Mud Lake Farm Supply and Alforex Seed. Facilities were provided by Jefferson County, Bingham County, Caribou County and Franklin County.

Figure 1. Attendee understanding of Forage School topics



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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