

Agricultural News

Volume 4, Issue 4

July/August 1992

Cooperation is key to pesticide container recycling

Over 40,000 empty pesticide containers were collected and recycled in Minnesota during 1992. Some 25 counties administered the program at 33 collection sites throughout Minnesota.

"This was really a county-based program in 1992," says Dean Herzfeld, pesticide applicator training specialist with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) started a successful pilot program in 1990 and 1991. But due to a funding shortfall, county governments had to assume liability and more personnel assistance in 1992.

"Counties managed and administered the programs in 1991," Herzfeld says. MDA and the Minnesota Extension Service continued to provide technical assistance and training for volunteer collection people in counties.

"County commissioners had to sign off on liability and support," Herzfeld says. County extension

agents, county solid waste officers and local dealers not only kept the program going, but in some counties showed dramatic increases over past years. Indus-

try and environmental groups were also key players.

Take the example of three counties—Stevens, Swift and Pope. Collections doubled in each of the



past two years, while rejection rates (for containers that weren't adequately prepared for recycling) dropped.

Rick Hansen, MDA, has the figures for the three counties: 800 containers collected with a 25 percent rejection rate in 1990; 2,500 containers with a 5 percent rejection rate in 1991; and 4,500 containers with only a 2 percent rejection rate in 1992.

There are many other agent success stories. Curt Nyegaard, Kittson County, provided cluster leadership to get county-managed programs started. Then, "agents in other clusters called him," says Rhonda Amundson, Red Lake County agriculture agent.

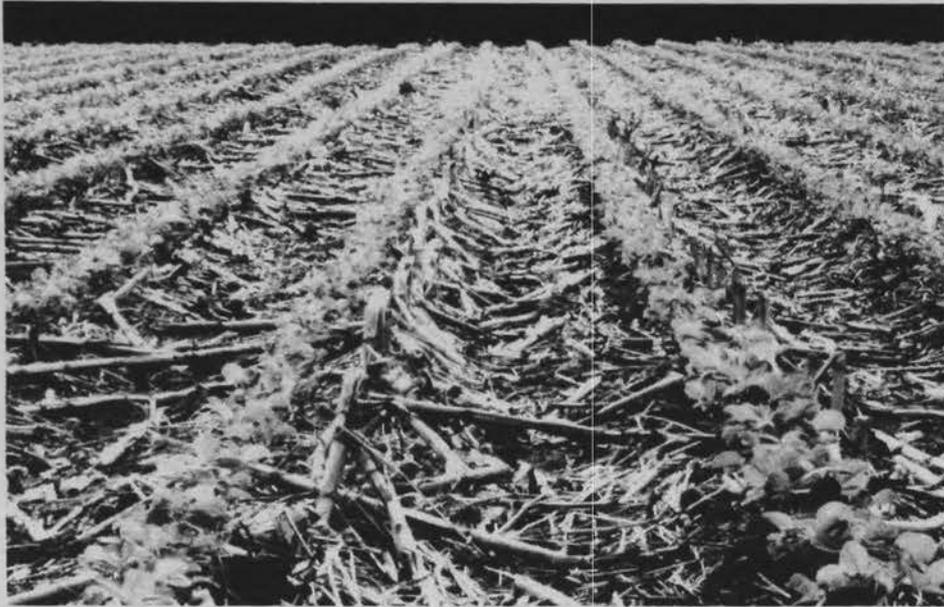
The Minnesota Plant Food and Chemicals Association helped with statewide coordination. They coordinated collection dates, train-



Minnesota counties collected and recycled over 40,000 empty pesticide containers in 1992. (photo by Don Breneman)

Continued on page 4

This archival publication may not reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations.
Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.



No-till soybeans planted in corn residue. Crop residue management in Minnesota will be promoted through local alliances of diverse groups. (photo by Dave Hansen)

Invitation open to help promote crop residue management

The stakes are high. Minnesota farmers who don't comply with crop residue requirements will lose government farm program benefits.

Farmers have only two more cropping years—1993 and 1994—before they must start implementing soil conservation plans mandated by the 1985 Farm Bill.

The Minnesota Alliance for Crop Residue Management (MACRM) wants to help every farmer comply. And, they're looking for interested people to join the statewide alliance and help promote the effort. "The

door is open. We're especially looking for representatives from wildlife groups," says Don Olson, agriculture program leader with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service (MES).

Initial planning for the alliance was started by the Minnesota Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service, the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Farm Equipment Association of Minnesota and South Dakota.

"That core group has expanded," Olson says. It now includes environmental groups, crop consultants, seed companies, plus fertilizer and pesticide representatives.

"Local alliances will be the key," Olson emphasizes. "We encourage farmers to participate in establishing demonstration farms in each county, and to become members of local alliances." Farmer volunteers will help transfer crop residue management technology at meetings and field days.

Who will lead local alliances? "That depends on who 'surfaces' and demonstrates initiative, cooperation and willingness to work with others to help make the alliance successful," Olson says.

MES has three people on the statewide alliance. Tillage specialist John Moncrief is the team leader. Tim Wagar, area crops and soils agent at Rochester, represents the "field work," hands-on expertise. Olson says he's the "gopher", eager to do what it takes to make the program work.

The MACRM has an ambitious strategic plan with three focus areas:

1. Information, education and promotion.
2. Training
3. Technology transfer

"Things are rolling fast," Olson says. "One of the biggest priorities is encouraging an "Alliance for Crop Residue Management" in each county."

Many counties have a good start. A few examples:

- Ottertail County has an informal but active local alliance.
- Five counties (Brown, Martin, Jackson, Cottonwood and Rock) have produced a tillage video. The video covers innovative tillage systems, specifically no-till.
- "Many farmers are looking at no-till now that equipment has come on the market that can do a good job," says Wayne Schoper, Brown County agricultural agent.
- Extension agents in Goodhue County established a no-till soybean plot in cooperation with the Goodhue County Soil and Water Conservation District. Five different planting units were used, with different herbicide treatments across the plots to look at weed control with no-till planting.

Jack Sperbeck

Agricultural News is a publication of the Agriculture Program Area, produced by Educational Development System, Minnesota Extension Service. Ideas for stories and letters to the editor are encouraged. Contact Jack Sperbeck, 447 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108. Tel. 612-625-1794.

Editor: Jack Sperbeck
 Design: John Molstad
 Desk Top Editor: Phyllis Petersen
 Photo Editor: Don Breneman

The Farmer becomes USAggriculture

There's a good chance you've seen the July edition of *The Farmer* magazine. It's a special commemorative issue highlighting the magazine's 110-year history.

Starting in August, the publication becomes *USAggriculture*, with expanded coverage into eight Midwestern states. The new publication will be a four-color, twice-a-month tabloid with three sections. The second section will be called *The Farmer* for subscribers in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota.

"We're very interested in good stories and ideas from the University of Minnesota. Our goals are to help farmers make a profit, remain ahead of the technology curve and lead a better life," said David Hest, editor of *USAggriculture*.

Meanwhile, *Minnesota Wallace's Farmer* will have a different name and logo, effective next issue. It becomes the *Minnesota Farmer*.

Jack Sperbeck

Farm radio changes

A reorganization has occurred at MAGNET Radio, a division of the Minnesota News Networks.

The Minnesota Farm Network (MFN) began broadcasting June 1 on approximately 60 radio stations throughout the state. Tom Rothman will continue to produce and anchor the network's broadcasts from St. Paul.

He'll be joined by Renville County farmer Alan Roebke, who will provide commentary about farm issues. MFN is essentially the same network as MAGNET was, minus several key stations such as KWOA-Worthington, KSUM-Fairmont, and KROC-Rochester.

Marty Moen

Planning Quality Extension Programs

"Dzien dobry" and "Guten Tag" seem appropriate greetings this issue since I've just returned from five weeks in Europe—three weeks teaching in Poland ("Dzien dobry" is "good day" in Polish) and two weeks on annual leave in Germany ("Guten Tag").

The teaching in Poland was at the invitation of Land O'Lakes. They currently have an AID contract to provide training there and in Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics as well. I spent the first week assisting a Land O'Lakes co-op manager from Wisconsin who was teaching an "Introduction to Agribusiness Management" course and the second and third weeks teaching a course that I had prepared. LOL calls it "Training of Trainers" but the content is (no surprise!) adult learning and Extension program planning. The TOT course participants were Polish agricultural advisors.

In Poland the Agricultural Advisory Service—their equivalent to Extension—is a part of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. There are 49 *vivodships* (regional jurisdictions) and each has an ODR (Polish acronym for regional Extension Center) with a director, assistant director, regional coordinators, and agricultural advisors. In the past, agricultural advisors were assigned to work with 50-60 farmers in a *Gmina* (subpart of a *vivodship*) but the advisory service staff has been cut 40%. So, they have to look at other ways of reaching farmers—hence the emphasis on program planning.

The "Training of Trainers" course was designed for 20-25 hours of instructional time (week-long intensive) with small groups working on a project—the design of a program plan that they could use in their work.

All teaching was done through an interpreter. The course materials, including overhead transparencies, had been sent to Poland for translation, so participants had a course notebook with the reading material and the exercises for each unit in their own language.

Polish agricultural advisors were very interested in how county agents in the U. S. work, how many farmers you serve, where you are officed, the kind of equipment you have available, teaching methods used, etc. I wished that I had taken some pictures or slides along, both of Extension activities and Minnesota agricultural scenes. Advisors also asked numerous questions about crops and livestock, yields, average size of farms, etc. I needed my *Agricultural Statistics* book, which I also didn't have.

The average farm size in Poland is very small by our standards—8 hectares or about 20 acres. Anyone who has a cow or two and lives in a rural area is a "farmer." Fortunately, only about 25% of the farmland was collectivized after World War II. Much of that land is in the area formerly occupied by the Germans (Prussia) who left at the end of the war.

I also discovered that Polish agricultural advisors are very much like U. S. Extension workers in another way. They mostly make the advisory service their career, they like their co-workers and they like having a good time together. The people at ODR Stzrelino near Slupsk were especially pleased to have an American visitor (it was very significant to them that I arrived the same day that President Bush was in Poland for the internment of Paderewski's remains) and had field trips planned every day after class and a kielbasa roast one day. They even videotaped everything and gave me the tape to bring home!

Marilyn Grantham

Marilyn Grantham
Program Leader

New manure applicator program protects water quality

It's coming soon—a new Manure Applicator Planner (MAP) program that protects water supplies and puts the manure to good use as fertilizer.

The new MAP program has been computerized, and plans are to make the software available in all 50 states. Dick Levins, farm management economist with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service, is now training Minnesota extension agents on use of the program.

The new MAP program addresses sustainable agriculture, water quality and waste management programs. "Regarding sustainable agriculture," Levins says, "it's widely recognized that animal manure, properly managed at the farm level, can be an economical on-farm source of plant nutrients.

"Improperly managed, that same manure may cause significant water pollution problems. Excess nitrogen can leach into groundwater and excess phosphorus can enter surface water through runoff."

Levins says a key part of sound manure management is developing a farm plan that uses the manure to its best advantage as fertilizer, and at the same time protects water supplies.

"Developing these plans is complex," he says. The amounts and nutrient content of the manure must be carefully matched to the nutrient requirements of crops grown and field-to-field soil variations.

Levins says the MAP program is designed for use in this situation:

1. A farmer knows how much manure will be available on the farm during the year, and knows the average nutrient analysis for nitrogen, phosphate and potassium. The manure may be from dairy, beef, swine or poultry.
2. The manure can be applied on from one to 12 fields. The farmer knows nitrogen, phosphate and potassium requirements for crops to be grown on each field.
3. The problem is to find the right mix of manure and commercial fertilizer to apply to each field so that two things happen: Nitrogen

and phosphate applications are restricted to environmentally acceptable limits, and total fertilizer costs for the farm are kept to a minimum.

"The program can be modified to suit individual state conditions," Levins says. More information is available from Dick Levins, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108-6040; telephone 612/625-5238.

Jack Sperbeck

Cooperation/Cont. from p. 1

ing sessions and adapted the '91 operator's manual for the '92 program.

They also worked with United Agri Products, a company that volunteered at no cost to "chip" plastic containers and transport them free of charge. The plastic chips were then recycled into new containers. Due to local sponsorship, there were no fees charged to people who brought containers in.

"It was exciting the way local county extension agents took the lead," says Lisa Holmquist, member services director of the Minnesota Plant Food and Chemicals Association. "The agents know their customers, dealers and people so well. They know how to network."

What about the future? Ray Thompson, county agricultural agent in Marshall County, says container recycling could eventually be done by industry.

"Through the pilot program, farmers are getting used to triple rinsing and bringing containers in that are dry and adequately prepared," he says.

In addition, new packaging technology (mini-bulk containers, water soluble bags and refillable containers) are replacing the need to recycle many pesticide containers.

Jack Sperbeck



A new computerized Manure Applicator Program will help protect water supplies. (photo by Don Breneman)