

Agricultural News

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Survival most important issue for farmers, Redalen says

Whether the farm enterprise is profitable is the most important issue facing farm families. "It's a matter of whether a farm enterprise can survive tough economic times," said Elton R. Redalen, Minnesota commissioner of agriculture, in his keynote address at the recent agent in-service training session on the university's St. Paul Campus.

... "our greatest challenge is to educate the public" on this issue...

And, "our greatest challenge is to educate the public" on this issue, he added. He lamented Minnesota's low average milk production per dairy cow. Some dairy farmers should consider culling cows "at one of the highest prices ever," he said.

Redalen, who also owns and operates a family dairy farm, said farming "is a great lifetime experience. It's a lot of fun, but you won't get rich overnight."

He lauded extension for providing "impartial and unbiased" advice to farm families. He also encouraged better communication between extension and the legislature. "You should know your legislator on a first name basis," he said.

The opening session of in-service training also featured a report on the 1990 Farm Bill task force, chaired by extension economist Mike Boehlje. Educational topics identified by the task force included sustainable agriculture; linkages among agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat and the environment; wetlands and water quality; forestry; food safety and quality; alternative agricultural research and commercialization; and direct marketing.

Jack Sperbeck



Elton Redalen, (left), commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, talks some farming issues with Dave Kjome, Olmsted County agriculture agent, at the March in-service agent training conference. (photo by Don Breneman)

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Current information available from University of Minnesota Extension: <http://www.extension.umn.edu>.

Agent Profile

Minnesota has the top water quality educational program in the country, says **Roger Larson**, Chippewa County agricultural agent.

Roger spent a quarter study leave last winter talking with county extension agents in California, Arizona, Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Florida. He spent a day in 34 counties, visiting with the host agent, going along on client calls and to meetings. "I was impressed by the tremendous number of crops in California. People in California are very concerned about safe use of pesticides. The pest management education programs for farmers are very good. There's more 'good judgment' in pesticide usage than the public is aware of," he says.

He's been pushing environmental and water quality programs in Chippewa County and in the Minnesota River cluster (10). For example, a one-page instructional sheet on recycling, along with a convenient refrigerator magnet, have been distributed to 3,000 homes in Chippewa County.

The attractive refrigerator magnet says "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle...make it second nature in Chippewa County." Brief recycling instructions are given on the magnet, with a more detailed version in the accompanying green sheet from the Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota, Chippewa County. The telephone number of the Chippewa County landfill is listed for more information.



The five-county Minnesota River Cluster just came out with "Recycling News," an attractive, eight-page tabloid newspaper funded by county commissioners in Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine counties. Editorial committee for the newspaper is the environmental issue team: Richard Kvols, Yellow Medicine; Larson, Chippewa; Pam Moore, Yellow

Medicine; and Dorothy Rosemeier, Swift.

The newspaper is printed on recycled paper and with soy ink. It gives details on recycling, curbside recycle pick-up services and materials recycled, along with the telephone number of the solid waste officer for each county.

Roger says clients are getting all kinds of "issues" programming, but most of it is integrated with programs such as or live-stock or crop production. "We try to keep issues in front of people, but they may not be aware we're talking 'issues' to them," he says.

Jack Sperbeck

Small Grains Institute draws large crowds



Agriculture agents Rhonda Magsam Amundson, Red Lake County, and Ray Thompson (right), Marshall County, answer questions at the 1991 Small Grains Institute's information booth.

The two-day Small Grains Institute & International Expo in Crookston drew close to 2,000 people.

"We had about 1,200 people the first day, and around 700 the second day," says Carlyle Holen, area crop pest management agent at Crookston. Many agents and campus faculty people worked on the first-time program, held March 14-15. Seed money for the event this year came from the wheat and barley growers.

The Small Grains Institute was

sponsored by the Minnesota Extension Service, Minnesota Wheat Council, Minnesota Barley Council and American Oats Association. It was the first time a multi-commodity program was held on mutual concerns of the three commodity groups.

For next year's program, already in the planning stages, there's already a "start-up" fund consisting of income from this year's event.

Jack Sperbeck

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Earlier planting: An extra 36 million bushels of corn

Surveys show the 1989 Minnesota corn crop was planted 10 days earlier than it was in 1970.

Over the past 20 years, the average planting date for corn has been earlier by one-half day per year, says Dale Hicks, extension agronomist. He calculates the economic impact of earlier planting as follows:

There are 6 million (usually more) acres of corn grown annually in Minnesota, with a state average yield of about 120 bushels per acre. With a conservative yield effect of 0.5 percent for each day of earlier planting, Minnesota farmers are producing 36 million bushels more corn due to planting 10 days earlier than they did in 1970.

earlier planting increases profits

"At any corn price, profitability has been enhanced substantially without an increase in production costs," Hicks says.

Research on planting date and maturity of hybrids has shown that:

✓Yields are improved with earlier planting for all maturity groups of corn hybrids.

✓Yield reductions associated with later planting are greatest for full-season hybrids.

✓Later-planted, short-season hybrids reach maturity and harvestable moisture levels at earlier calendar dates than the early-planted, full-season hybrids. "We've revised the recommendations for planting dates and the order of planting various corn hybrids," Hicks says.

These recommendations have been widely promoted in Minnesota through the corn extension program. And earlier planting has substantially increased the profitability of growing corn.

Marketing Programs

Applying Marketing Concepts in Program Planning

(Seventh in a series on program quality and applying marketing concepts in program planning.)

Many MES faculty members are interested in marketing and public relations these days. But there's little common understanding of what marketing and public relations are and how they apply to program planning. Some faculty members think marketing is promotion, others think it is selling, and few agree on how marketing and public relations are related to each other. Perhaps one way to "cut through the fog" is to discuss how an extension program "looks" before and after applying marketing concepts.

Programs usually include one or more activities or events and generally are supported by some educational or teaching materials. Some program participants prefer to get information or "learn" simply by obtaining a publication or other educational materials or by asking questions over the telephone or in person, so these kinds of delivery can be "products" as well.

Programs are usually designed following some sort of "model" process. There are many program development and design models in education but practically all adult or extension education models include five basic steps: (1) determining the needs of prospective participants; (2) enlisting the participation of some representative participants in the planning process; (3) establishing goals and objectives for the program and the learners; (4) designing educational activities and events that will enable learners to achieve their goals and objectives; and (5) planning and carrying out a system of evaluation.

Applying marketing concepts to the basic program planning process adds some different dimensions and "sharpens" the involvement of prospective participants in the process. For example, the first step in planning a program normally calls for some sort of "needs assessment" which could be analyzing secondary data, selecting "expert" opinion, conducting surveys (personal, telephone and/or mail) of prospective learners, etc. The key to successful needs assessment is using at least three different techniques—a research principle called "triangulation." This means that gathering supporting evidence of needs from at least three different sources provides a stronger foundation for a program than only one or two sources, or even worse, making "needs assumptions."

As extension workers and university faculty, we often think we know what people need. With experience we become expert in subject matter. But we need to remember that experts can be wrong and that's why we need to gather information from other sources that "triangulates" or supports the knowledge we have gained from experience.

Assessing needs is a key area where applying marketing concepts can improve program planning. The market research techniques I've reviewed in the six previous issues of *Agricultural News* (client observation, staff feedback, analyzing secondary data and records of prior participation, expert panels, focus groups, and surveys) are largely the same kinds of needs assessment techniques that have always been recommended. The key is using a minimum of three of them and determining prospective program participants' needs, motivations and preferred means of participation (such as alternatives to group meetings like home study, video, audio tapes, etc.).

(More on program planning concepts and techniques next month.)



Marilyn Grantham
Program Leader, Agriculture



Campus Profile

Providing quality educational programs to both veterinarians and livestock producers is a top priority for extension veterinarian **James O. Hanson**.

Hanson has a joint appointment with the Minnesota Extension Service and College of Veterinary Medicine. He will retire at the end of June after 24 years of service to the university. He also spent 15 years in private veterinary practice at St. Peter, Minn.

In his extension role, Hanson coordinates veterinary extension work involving eight faculty members who have 25-50 percent extension appointments. For the last four years, he has also served as leader for coordinated programming in Livestock Based Systems. This involves extension faculty working in the livestock area and based in several different departments.

Among the successful programs Hanson has developed for livestock producers are the annual Swine Health Clinics. "The first one was in Worthington in 1974 and drew 750 people," Hanson recalls. "The clinics have been held annually since then, and usually draw 500-600 people at one or two sites."

Hanson feels bringing in "new blood" every year in the form of nationally-known speakers has been important to the success of the clinics. He also enlists veterinary practitioners in Minnesota to help with planning, promoting and conducting the programs.

Hanson's office puts on 20-30 continuing education programs each year for veterinarians. Registration fees from those attending provide the financial support for the programs.



that I was in practice for 15 years has helped me immensely," he says.

He also feels veterinarians can help carry extension's educational messages to many producers. "I consider veterinarians to be multipliers of our education process," he says. "We emphasize health management, drawing on available knowledge in animal science, agricultural engineering, agricultural economics and other agricultural disciplines. We try to provide quality educational programs that will assist veterinarians to become more capable of advising clients on animal health management."

Hanson grew up in the Fair-

mont area in southern Minnesota. He received his pre-veterinary training from Gustavus Adolphus College at St. Peter and the College of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota. He attended the College of Veterinary Medicine at the university and graduated in 1953. Upon graduation, he set up his own veterinary practice at St. Peter. It was a general practice centering on food animals, but also included substantial work with small animals and horses.

He accepted his present position in 1967 after being contacted by some faculty members at the university about the position. "I had no plans to leave practice," he said. "I thoroughly enjoyed my practice. But I also thoroughly enjoy what I do now. I especially enjoy working with people."

Hanson and his wife, Carol, have four children and 12 grandchildren. He is a member of many professional and veterinary organizations. He is a sports enthusiast and particularly enjoys playing golf. He also coached little league football and baseball and worked with 4-H while in practice at St. Peter.

Joseph Kurtz

Agricultural News to publish 6 times yearly

After this issue, *Agricultural News* will be published on an every-other-month basis to help cut costs. In most cases, length will remain the same.

Starting with the next (May-June) issue, you'll notice we'll be using a colored (blue) heading on the newsletter's title to make it more attractive to read. However, by pre-printing the paper, we incur very little extra expense. Thought you'd like to know...

Jack