Machine Shop Meetings Promote Great Dialog among Attendees

The Situation
Extension sugarbeet growers’ seminars attracted 725 attendees in January and February, 2016. Great attendance demonstrates enthusiasm for topics among sugarbeet producers, agriculturalists, and allied industry. However, large venues do not create an environment for teaching and learning.

Producers need hands-on experiences about the spread of resistant weeds and strategies to manage weeds in their fields. Meetings are best served when they are communities of neighbors, Growers living in close proximity to each other.

Extension Response
‘Machine shop’ meetings were arranged and conducted by sugarbeet cooperatives and Dr. Tom Peters, Extension Sugarbeet Agronomist, in December, 2015 and January and February, 2016 to discuss weed management. Geographic focus were counties where waterhemp has recently become or potentially will become a production challenge for producers including Richland, Cass, and Traill counties in ND and Norman, Clay, Wilken, Travers, Otter Tail, and Grant Counties in MN. The concept was a community of neighbors meeting in a Producer machine shed. Concept was modeled after approach used by Drs. Dexter and Cattanach in the 1980s and 90s. Meeting was demonstrations and conversation driven by attendees.

Impacts
Sixteen meetings and 361 attendees. Meetings were approximately 2 hours, depending on audience engagement. Some meetings were amazing, producers engaged in a serious dialog facilitated by Extension. There were other meetings where there was less conversation and sugarbeet cooperative agriculturalist prompted attendees. However, the objective of focused conversations on weed identification and management of weeds on a producer farm or the immediate area was accomplished by meeting and meeting format.

Meetings changed behaviors. Survey indicated use of preemergence herbicide on 110% of acres (multiple PRE application) compared to estimate of 30% use of PREs by growers in general.

Feedback
• “We (growers) like the small group format and the relaxed atmosphere of holding this type of session in a shop setting.”
• “Hands on weed identification was a valuable way to learn differences in what to look for in the field.”
• “a very unique way to engage an audience and keep them focused”
• “I give you an A+!!!”

Public Value Statement
New herbicides are not a solution for a problem created by herbicides. The solution is a community of neighbors united to manage weeds.

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