

"Final Project Report to the NYS IPM Program, Agricultural IPM 2006"

1. Title: IPM Vegetable Web log

2. Project Leaders: Teresa Rusinek, CCE Ulster; John Mishanec, NYS IPM

3. Cooperators:

Members of the Hudson Valley Growers Network (Ulster County) and Capital district Growers.

4. Abstract:

Grower - to grower information sharing has proved to be an effective teaching tool that is increasingly promoted by educational institutions and requested by growers. Growers in the Hudson Valley and Capital District have expressed a need for a mechanism by which they can frequently communicate with each other and Extension educators about the status of their crops. In response to this need, Cornell Cooperative Extension proposed to pilot and sponsor an IPM vegetable web log site for growers in the Capital District and in Ulster County. Beginning in May, the assistance of Cornell Cooperative Extension Information Technology was requested to set up the web log account. The assistance and web log account information was received the first week of August, too late to be useful for the 2006 growing season. Both project leaders learned the system and are ready to utilize the web log technology for the 2007 growing season.

5. Background and Justification:

Vegetable growers have illuminated the need for timely pest management information and sharing of pest management issues on a local level. While newsletters and list serves have been helpful, growers have commented that newsletters don't necessarily address problems they are experiencing at the time. Often, Cornell Cooperative Educators cannot make a site visit immediately or do not have experience with the pest problem a grower has. Growers and educators feel that they can benefit from the collective knowledge of a group of growers and industry professionals. A grower vegetable web log can improve communications and networking among grower groups and extension educators. Web logs enable users to publish short comments and ideas instantly for other people to read and can be an effective communications tool for small groups of people to keep in touch with each other. A web log allows individuals to post information directly to the Web. Web logs generally consist of text and images and can appear in a calendar type format.

IPM Scouting programs have proved to be instrumental in conducting accurate field pest assessments. Scouting programs provide a great deal of information to the grower as well as to Extension educators who can, in turn, summarize scouting data and share it with a group of growers. Growers who do not practice scouting in their fields are more likely to adopt the method if they hear about the benefits from a source such as the web log.

6. Objectives:

1. To initiate a web log site for Hudson Valley Growers and Capital district growers

2. To increase growers knowledge and awareness of IPM methodologies and other Cornell resources
3. To improve Cornell Cooperatives extension's responsiveness to grower pest management needs
4. To increase growers and educators awareness of field conditions and pest problems.
5. To evaluate the effectiveness of the web log.

Procedures:

1. Beginning in May 2006, the project leaders contacted Cornell Cooperative Extension Information Technology Services requesting assistance and account information for setting up the web log site. Both project leaders took the on-line course on web log setup. The web log account information was not received till early August. This was in the middle of the growing season and neither project leader had the time to implement the web log. It was decided to wait till 2007 to implement the web log. This allows for the project leaders to familiarize themselves to web log procedures, and work out any bugs in the system.
2. A part time scout was hired in the Capital District during the 2006 growing season and conducted field visits to farms and assessed pest levels. The scout visited 18 farms weekly. The scouting results were reported on the weekly Pest Status Report e-mail newsletter. A scout was not hired in Ulster County.
3. Beginning in May 2007 the web log will be available to growers. After the 2007 growing season, growers using the Web Log will be asked to complete an evaluation which will ask questions about the effectiveness of the Web log in terms of the objectives stated above. Growers who do not participate in using the web log (but used traditional Extension educational materials) will also be evaluated.

8. Results and Discussion:

While the web log was not set up for the summer of 2006, both project leaders felt with the new technology and the inherent bugs and learning curve involved, it was probably best the way it turned out. Both project leaders have posted information on the web log site and experienced problems. It would not have been good to experience problems during the pressure of the growing season. Both project leaders have gained confidence in working with the web log. Beginning in May of 2007, the project leaders will upload educational materials and pictures onto the web log that will be useful for the grower of eastern NY. Funds from this project will be utilized in Ulster County in 2007 to support a part time scout to visit farms weekly and to summarize scouting information to upload onto the web log. The most important factor is that the information will be localized and timely. Through the web log, growers will read about and see images of pest problems on other farms in their area, giving them a more comprehensive sense of pest pressure and a more information as to how to address the pest problems. The economic benefit of this project will come as a result of efficient and informed pest management that enhances production and preserves environmental health.

