

NYS IPM Project Annual Report

Project Title: Improving Field Crop Extension outreach through enhanced growing season communication and outreach

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Project Start: 1/1/2012

Project Term: 10/31/2014

Report Fiscal Year: 2013

Executive Summary

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Enhancing communication opportunities between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. 2013 marked the sixth year for this project. A series of twenty-three conference calls were held between 5/2/13 and 10/10/13 to improve campus and field staff communication regarding field crop pest and crop management issues during the 2013 growing season. Each call averaged 13 participants and lasted forty-five minutes. Conference call participants were better equipped to conduct their outreach efforts and meet the field crop pest management needs of their stakeholders. Enhanced communication among CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities improved effectiveness of outreach efforts regarding timely pest management issues. In addition to direct communication during the conference call, topics discussed were summarized and made available to other stakeholders through 23 on-line NYS IPM Weekly Pest Report blogs available at the NYS IPM Program field crops website. An end of season evaluation questionnaire was used to document feedback, suggestions and potential impacts of the conference call series.

Issue

County and regional Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) field crop educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Regular communication between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. CCE personnel translate knowledge gained from these educational opportunities into outreach materials and other resources to effectively meet needs of clientele.

Integral to regular communication and team building is an open exchange of information between individuals with varying levels of experience. Seasoned experts are able to help new extension personnel gain a statewide perspective of production issues and opportunities in real time. Regular dialogues provide a forum for review and discussion of new information and

technologies, including strengths, weaknesses, and advantages of adoption. Frequent communication assures our unified vision and strengthens our consistent outreach message. These exchanges are often instrumental in helping to identify applied research needs, local demonstration opportunities, and the development of outreach resources / programs.

Progress Summary

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators are Cornell University's front line in helping New York field crop producer clientele with crop production and pest management issues. Keeping CCE personnel informed on the latest information and developments helps us meet Cornell's high standards for extension outreach and provides clientele with quality, pertinent, timely and user-friendly programs and resources that maximize our educational impacts. Enhancing communication opportunities between CCE county and campus personnel helps strengthen the outreach network, and is an important component of CCE's professional development. A series of twenty-three conference calls were held between 5/2/13 and 10/10/13 to improve campus and field staff communication regarding field crop pest and crop management issues during the 2013 growing season. Each call averaged 13 participants and lasted forty-five minutes.

Enhanced communication among CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities improved effectiveness of outreach efforts regarding timely pest management issues. In addition to direct communication during the conference call, topics discussed were summarized and made available to other stakeholders through 23 on-line NYS IPM Weekly Pest Report blogs available at the NYS IPM Program field crops website. This year's call was particularly effective in communicating timely information on new and unusual pest outbreaks of northern corn leaf blight and gray leaf spot, western bean cutworm, wheat and corn fungicide use decisions, crane fly damage to corn and alfalfa and the first report of a CRW Bt field corn failure in NY. An end of season evaluation questionnaire was used to document feedback, suggestions and potential impacts of the conference call series.

Expected and Observed Impact

The objective of this effort was to improve the timely statewide communication of pest management and crop production among field crop CCE personnel during the growing season. As in previous years (2008-2012) of field crop conference call implementation, CCE personnel with field crop responsibilities took advantage of the weekly opportunity to share observations, gain insights, acquire and present practical knowledge and technical information in an in-house professional development environment. These timely efforts enhanced field crop extension personnel (educators and faculty) communication and awareness on current pest and crop conditions. In addition, the timely forum allowed for discussion of anticipated pest, crop and weather issues, integrated pest and crop management and potential extension programming opportunities. The majority of those involved are repeat participants each year with new extension field staff joining in the discussions with more experienced field staff. Twenty-five individuals have regularly participated and contributed to the effort and it's success over its six year duration. Project evaluations have documented participants found value in the timely

updates, discussion, professional development and team building aspects of the conference calls that could then be used to increase potential extension outreach impacts with stakeholders. The primary benefit of the conference call program lies in the enhanced communication and professional development of the extension personnel involved. Stakeholders ultimately benefit from this effort through the potential enhanced extension outreach impacts related to an increased timely awareness of pest issues, pre-emptive monitoring and management of potential pest problems that help grower stakeholders minimize or avoid pest impacts, better address pesticide use decisions and protect net profitability.

All Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators and Cornell faculty with field crop responsibilities were invited to participate. A total of twenty-three CCE county and regional based educators and Cornell extension field crop specialist faculty participated in the twenty-three calls held during the growing season between 5/2/13 and 10/10/13. Weekly calls averaged 13 participants with active participation and contributions by Drs. Russ Hahn (Cornell weed scientist), Gary Bergstrom (Cornell plant pathologist) and Margaret Smith (Cornell plant breeder). Elson Shields made a guest appearance to speak about discovery of the first the CRW Bt Failure in NY. Weekly Field Crop IPM Conference Calls included roll call, weather outlook (Northeast Region Climate Center), participant sharing of statewide pest and crop observations, and a review of the following weeks pest watch list. The weather outlook was provided by Jessica (Rennells) Spaccio (Northeast Climate Center). Field observations were shared by field crop CCE educators, IPM personnel and crop specialist faculty. Highlights of discussions regarding current pest status were summarized for inclusion in the “View from the Field” feature of the NYS IPM Weekly Field Crop Pest Report blog. This on-line newsletter (<http://blogs.cornell.edu/ipmwpr/#>) is intended for use by field crop professionals including producers, extension, agribusinesses, consultants, federal, state and local personnel and the general public. Articles from the Weekly Pest Report are frequently used in various extension newsletters and other media with an estimated outreach of 11,000 subscribers.

The season 2013 growing season was marked by early season rainy weather conditions that delayed planting, affected weed control efforts including timing of pre- and post-plant herbicide applications. Insect and disease issues were generally moderate to low this season with the exception of potato leafhopper populations in eastern NY, an increase in western bean cutworm populations, late season issues with northern corn leaf blight and Gray leaf spot in corn and the Fusarium Head Blight (wheat) prediction model did not hold up particularly well this season. Bird damage to corn and wheat presented issues again this season.

Weekly calls helped CCE field crop personnel keep informed on current status of statewide pest issues and provided a forum for detailed discussions on a variety of topics including: updates on the Fusarium Head Blight prediction model and fungicide use decision making (wheat), corn fungicide use considerations, western bean cutworm updates on risk to sweet and field corn and dry bean, weed management recommendations and decision making, vertebrate damage to field crops, sharing of timely resources and field monitoring reminders.

Participation in the field crop conference calls enhanced CCE outreach through timely communication among extension field staff enabling improvements to local outreach. CCE

personnel could easily transform knowledge and insights gained from conference call discussions into direct outreach to local stakeholders resulting in improvements in cost effective and environmentally sound pest management decision-making.

End of season program evaluations were very positive with general agreement that participation in the conference calls was a very worthwhile experience, increased participant awareness of current field issues, provided pertinent timely information critical for outreach and identified a “go-to” person if additional information was needed.

In addition to the weekly conference call audience, the Weekly Field Crop Conference call was discussed and the program evaluation shared as a topic within the Livestock and Field Crop IPM update at the Cornell Cooperative Extension November 2013 CCE In Service, Ithaca NY 11/20/13.

A sampling of participant end of season program evaluation responses follow.

What did you like the *most* about the NYS Field Crop Weekly Conference Call?

- For me, and my newbie status, it was all good exposure for me – to hear what everyone else was seeing, focusing on, etc.
- The opportunity to hear from other educators from across the state on what they are seeing particularly from those who are able to focus more on FC (*field crops*) than we have been able to here in our county. Plus hearing the insight of the campus faculty and staff.
- It kept me up to date with a statewide perspective on pest, disease, & crop development. It pushed me to get out and scout. It helped me anticipate potential problems for growers might face.
- As in other years, hearing about what others were seeing around the state in terms of pests and crop growth. It was also good getting updates on specific topics – such as CRW resistance incident in Cayuga Co.
- Timeliness of information discussed and presented.
- Timely information from field staff around the state. Comments and input from Cornell experts.
- I miss some things happening in the field and this keeps me informed. Also, it is a good forum to ask questions.
- A quick way to disseminate and discuss current conditions
- The heads up about pests that were escalating the follow up with assistance in identification and control and the ability to pose questions that could be responded to by those with perspectives on a problem

Were there one or two items discussed during the conference call that helped you make an impact with producers or clientele?

- Even though it was off-topic, the help I received and the ensuing conversation about milkweed in grass hayfields was extremely helpful and most timely!
- I could usually apply what we talked about immediately in the field. In terms of pest experience, I’m ‘young and impressionable’ so it was all very very useful.

- Yes, but I would say with short staffing we have not been able to take advantage of these opportunities. Hopefully going forward with more staff we can better use the information to help our producer audience.
- This has been a great program, that once you've participated, you really see the value. I wish we could encourage some of field crop colleagues to tune in more often, as their input/observations is often very helpful.
- Yes, but there were a couple of key issues that I got from the conference calls that I put in my newsletter – just can't remember the exact topic.
- Each week the call helped give us a summary to prepare the NYS IPM Weekly Field Crops Pest Report.
- Discussion of weed management tactics helped me dissuade producers from making unnecessary applications during small grain harvests.
- These kind of situations provide awareness and then a go-to person if you need further input or want to question some things
- Weather during flowering of wheat in our area was not supportive of fusarium development. The map showed us at low levels for that period. When Mike mentioned that they had growers that tested their wheat and they had significant levels of DON I immediately called the 6 major wheat growers and they tested their wheat. Some found significant levels, the testing saved them an expensive trip to the mill and refusal.

Plans for 2014: A Smith-Lever CCE grant will continue funding for the Weekly Field Crop Pest Conference call series through the 2014 growing season season. The 2014 effort would strive to increase the number of participants, incorporate more use of WebX collaboration software for training purposes and invited presentations by subject matter specialists. A Cornell Smith-Lever proposal has been submitted to seek continued funding for the 2015 – 2017 seasons.

Acknowledgement:

Funding for this project provided through a Cornell CALS USDA Smith-Lever Grant.