



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Nutrient management plan preparation with small groups of farmers

Since 2003, 710 Minnesota farmers in 68 small-group Extension-led workshops have prepared two-field nutrient management plans (NMP) for their own farms. The 3-hour workshops are hosted by county feedlot officers, conservation districts, local Extension offices, or livestock producer organizations. Most participants have been non-CAFO livestock producers with manure management requirements under state rules. Participants complete questionnaires pre- and post-workshop. Pre-workshop stated implementation of specific practices compared to post-workshop stated intention to adopt those practices were 60% vs 94% for testing manure, 60% vs 82% for calibrating manure spreaders, 44% vs 88% for crediting the nutrient value of applied manure, and 58% vs 74% for keeping records of manure applications. A decrease (93% vs 79%) for modifying manure applications in sensitive areas indicated that producers had not previously understood management requirements in those areas. Based on calculations participants made during the workshop, 88% would reduce their cost of fertilizer by following their new plans. Most responded that they would complete the plan for the whole farm (58%) or turn it over to an agricultural professional for completion (16%), while 23% did not respond to the question. Another survey was sent to participants following the cropping season when the NMP would have first been implemented. Of 553 surveys sent 47% (260) were returned. Of the 260, 155 indicated they had completed or revised their NMP as a result of the workshop, and an additional 23 indicated that they either previously had a plan or were in the process of completing one. Of those not completing their plans, 23 indicated that a plan is not required of their operation, while others cited complexity of the plan (18), shortage of time (12), not a farm operator (7), or loss of professional plan preparer (4).

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