

# Capitol Region Grain Producers Gather For Seminar

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*Lancaster Farming Staff*

**LEBANON (Lebanon Co.)** — Several producers took advantage of a recent crop seminar to earn pesticide credits and learn information about grain crop production at a seminar conducted at the Lebanon Valley Agriculture Center.

John Rowehl, Cumberland County, a grain crops specialist for the region, discussed customizing cropping plans — how to make key plans to increase yields and minimize risk on drought-prone soils.

Fertilizer, said Rowehl, is important to manage correctly. Crop producers should adjust nitrogen rates based on yield potential. "Don't fertilize for 180 bushels of corn if what you're looking at is 120," he said. "If you are overfertilizing on your lower-producing soils, it could add up to some money."

"The trick is having good crop records to know what has been harvested over the years. You don't want to plan for failure, but you don't want to be overly optimistic."

During a dry season, "it's better to put nitrogen on up front and get good growth," which will help the crop to "withstand drought when it does come," since the "root growth was in the beginning of the season," he said.

Rotation was another topic. Well-drained, high-producing soils are more adaptable to no-till and short rotations, he said.

"My rule of thumb is, when in doubt, rotate," Rowehl said.

According to Penn State studies, "you can see the immediate benefits just when you get out of continuous corn and go into hay," he said.

"Most of the time, when soils are high in clay content and have low moisture and low organic matter, there is more benefit to rotation on poor soils than on rich soils," he said.

Del Voight, regional pest management specialist, spoke about the "bank" of seed. Putting the situation in perspective, about three percent of plant species have weedy traits — or 250 out of 8,000 plant species.

Weed seeds may remain viable for many years, so understanding what seeds are in the soils is an important weed management tool, said Voight.

Also, understanding weed life cycles is important, since "if you don't know what it is and how it grows, how can you manage it?" Voight asked.

Weed seeds are transported through animals or custom combines. "You can do something to prevent them if you clean your equipment," he said.

As a rule, weed annuals produce more seeds than perennials, which need chemicals targeted to their strong underground structures.

They may remain viable for up to 39 years. I don't think you'll ever reach a point where you've eliminated all weed seeds in a particular bank," said Voight.

Altering the planting date impacts weeds that germinate following planting. Letting the weeds come up, then planting the crop helps to control weeds. "if you are planting early, you're going to really need to have your arsenal as far as weed control," he said.

Mapping the area, and knowing target areas for fall applications of herbicide, saves producers from spending the money to do the whole field, he said. When weeds are four- to six-inches in height is when herbicide application produces the best results.

Bob Anderson, Lancaster County crops extension agent, spoke about agrosecurity and ways to raise the safety standard of the American farm.

Pesticide storage, security, and control, a lecture developed by Penn State's pesticide education program, is "not just an issue for children, although that's important," said Anderson.

Also environment, vandalism, spills, and theft are reasons to keep tabs on farm chemicals.

The storage facility should

not be near well-heads, "even if it (the well-heads) are no longer used," he said. Chemicals should also be stored away from livestock feed or feed storage areas.

Consider the potential for runoff," he said.

Maintain a separate location to store pesticides, advised Anderson. Also post the storage area with warning and no-smoking signs.

Keep copies of the labels of each product, he said. The Website bluebook-tor.com or

book.net provides pesticide product information (labels, supplemental labels, and MSDSs) from pesticide companies to help users locate specific information. Keeping inventory of the products will indicate if products have been

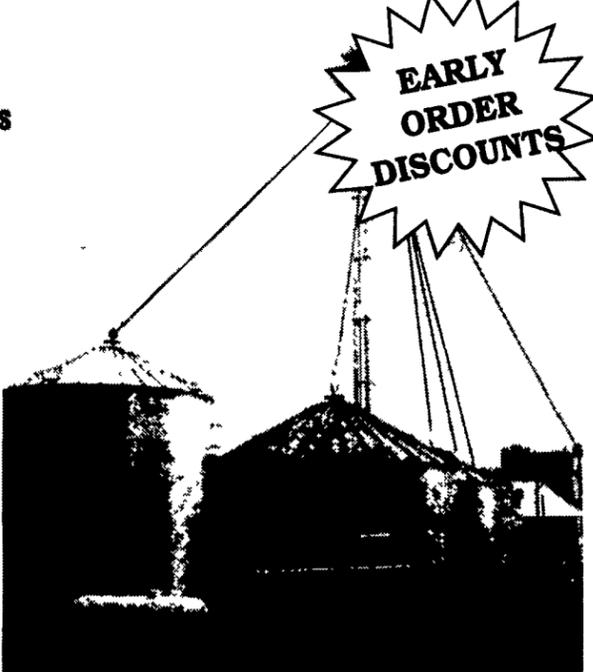
stolen or tampered with.

Keep pesticides in their original containers with readable labels attached. He also advised storing dry materials above liquids. Liquids, he said, may leak down over the dry pesticides. Ideally, however,

using non-porous shelves would eliminate any problems.

Farmers should have tools for spill absorption, such as absorbent material, a shovel,

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