

## Feedlot Rules Education Project Evaluation: Phase II, Land Application Focus Groups

Question Route, in brief, p. 1

Question Route, pp. 2-4 with context, notes, follow up or additional questions or prompts, cues, visual aids, beginning and ending phases, time allotments

### **Question route, in brief 6/21/02 Final**

#### OPENING

- Let's begin with telling us who you are, what animals you raise, and what you enjoy most when not farming.

#### INTRODUCTORY

- Describe a farm field with good manure application practices.

#### TRANSITION

- Please tell us about something interesting or different you've done or seen done in the last couple years to improve manure applications.

#### KEY: BARRIERS

Question pair: [ref. Questionnaire #8]

- Please identify something about Extension's recommended rates that makes them hard to use or follow.
- What could Extension do to make it easier to follow the recommended rates?

Question triplet: [ref. #10]

- What are some of the reasons for keeping good manure application records?
- What is it about such record keeping that keeps it from getting done or done well?
- What's the best thing Extension could do to improve manure application record keeping practices?

Question pair: [ref. #11, 12]

- Which setback, buffer, and incorporation rules are going to be the most difficult to work with?
- What can Extension do to help you with the rules for sensitive areas?

[If time, do 'barriers' for additional topics: manure and soil testing, equipment calibration, if time allows]

#### KEY: EDUCATION

Question set re. small group nutrient management plan writing sessions to be done next winter

- What are some things you like about this approach?
- What is the biggest reason why that approach would not succeed?
- All things considered, what is the best thing that could be done to get more plans written?

Question set re. preferred training topics and formats.

- Which topics would work really well with a field day? (farm tour, experiment station demonstration)
- Did anyone give a high rank to 'comprehensive website'?
- Did anyone give a high rank to 'newsletter' or 'update'?
- Did anyone give a high (low) rank to 'computer software for nutrient management'?
- For which topics do you need one-on-one assistance?

If time: - Given the scarcity of public staff, are you considering hiring anyone for one-on-one technical assistance (i.e., beyond what you are/may already doing)?

#### ENDING

- Of all the barriers to improving manure application practices mentioned today, which is going to be the biggest problem for you?
- Of all the education and assistance needs mentioned today, which is most important to you?
- With due consideration to Extension's limited resources, what is the most important thing Extension could do to improve its educational programming to achieve better manure application and protect water quality?

## Question route, with context and notes    6/21 Final    total time: 2:00

### **Beginning** [5']

FG background info., things that will help our discussion go smoothly/ground rules; introduce FG team

### **Opening question** (round robin)                      [5']

*Let's begin with telling us who you are, what animals you raise, and what you enjoy most when not farming.*

### **Introductory question** [7']

Now let's start to move into today's topic . . . We'll go around the table.

Together then, let's

***Describe a farm field with good manure application practices.***

\_\_\_\_Name\_\_\_\_ (1<sup>st</sup> respondent), would you start with developing this description?

[Prompts: buffers, residue, uniformity/distribution, soil testing]

### **Transition questions** (round robin)                      [8']

***Please tell us about something interesting or different you've done or seen done in the last couple years to improve manure applications.***

[Follow up/probing question: Give us an example of something you would like to do to improve manure applications, but haven't done yet]

### **Key questions** [70']

\_\_\_\_\_BARRIERS (40' for set of three topics)

Now we will begin to look at some specific manure application issues.

Let's start with one of the items on the questionnaire:

8. Do you (or your agronomist) follow UM Extension recommended nitrogen rates when calculating manure and fertilizer applications?

[Visual cue: familiar booklet with sample rate tables]

Question pair: ***Please identify something about Extension's recommended rates that makes them hard to use or follow.***

*(Is there anything else that gets in the way of following the recommended rates?)*

***What could Extension do to make it easier to follow the recommended rates?***

[Reminder: these tables include a lot of factors—yield goal, crop history, manure and legume credits, results of soil and manure testing, soil organic matter, and so on.]

[Possible factors (prompts): time, complicated, equipment, need/lack technical assistance,

[Note: there are two issues here: willingness and ability. Both are relevant to Extension programming]

[If time allows, follow up set: Do any of you rely on co-op agronomists or independent consultants to do the soil sampling and fertilizer recommendations? 'Yes', then: do the agronomists obtain info on the prior crop and manure applications to account for nitrogen credits? If not, how can we improve that communication?] [If necessary, can refer to tables, 3-12 in Manure Planning and RecKpg Guide]

\_\_\_\_\_

Let's look at another item on the questionnaire:

10. Do you keep records of manure application amounts for each field?

Question ***What are some of the reasons for keeping good manure application records?***

triplet: ***What is it about such record keeping that keeps it from getting done or done well?***

*(Are there any other reasons why field-by-field record keeping doesn't get done or done well?)*

***What's the best thing Extension could do to improve manure application record keeping practices?***

And, let's do one more; this one is on sensitive areas, numbers 11-12.

[Before asking the next question, prepare them with a 4' minute overview (given by local cooperator) of the 'setback', buffer, and incorporation rules, using a visual aid—large chart on easel, handout or OH projector)]

***Which setback, buffer, and incorporation rules are going to be the most difficult to work with?***

***What can Extension do to help you with the rules for sensitive areas?***

[Prompts, follow up questions: Do you want to say more about that? Are there any other concerns with respect to the new rules as they relate to protecting sensitive areas?]

[If time allows: ask similar questions on other topics—manure and soil testing, phosphorous, equipment calibration. Can ask the participants to suggest the topics.]

\_\_\_\_\_ EDUCATION, 30'

We're now going to shift to education and technical assistance needs on these same issues.

I have some questions for you based on the following information: (15')

Extension is planning to host small-group nutrient management plan writing sessions next winter.

Individual producers will bring in the information necessary to write a plan for two of their fields.

The producer will write the plan in the session with guidance from Extension staff.

Actually, much of the information required for a plan was referred to in the questionnaire you took earlier.

I should note here that the educational and plan writing assistance efforts will be done in collaboration with NRCS and SWCD.

***What are some things you like about this approach?***

***What is the biggest reason why that approach would not succeed?***

***All things considered, what is the best thing that could be done to get more plans written?***

[If time allows: Would you be willing to participate? Any other concerns or comments regarding nutrient management plans? Who will write your plan? (Prompts to get at 'why'?)]

\_\_\_\_\_ For the next set of questions, please refer to page 3 of your questionnaire. (15')

In the questionnaire you took earlier, you rated a number of topics to indicate the likelihood that you would attend or participate in educational sessions or programs. Then you ranked a set of educational tools (e.g., website) and formats (e.g., workshop). Now we would like to go a little further.

***Which topics would work really well with a field day?*** (farm tour, experiment station demonstration)

***Did anyone give a high rank to 'comprehensive website'?*** (prompts: comments, low ranking?)

***Did anyone give a high rank to 'newsletter' or 'update'?*** (describe the kind of newsletter you'd want; mail or email?; time of year; low ranking.)

***Did anyone give a high (low) rank to 'computer software for nutrient management'?***

***For which topics do you need one-on-one assistance?*** (say more, etc.)

***Given the scarcity of public staff, are you considering hiring anyone for one-on-one technical assistance (i.e., beyond what you are/may already doing)?*** (Can you tell me more about that? Would you pay SWCD . . . ?)

[If time allows, asks questions about the feedlot/manure application workshops: What did/didn't (do/don't) you like . . . What are some ways in which (the) workshops could be (have been) better?]

**Ending question(s)** [12']

Let's think back on all topics we've discussed or that were on the questionnaire . . . (And, remember, it's good to provide some comment or explanation, but let's keep the responses real brief here.)

Now, ***Of all the barriers to improving manure application practices mentioned today, which is going to be the biggest problem for you?*** [Can you say just a little about that?]

And, ***Of all the education and assistance needs mentioned today, which is most important to you? With due consideration to Extension's limited resources, what is the most important thing Extension could do to improve its educational programming to achieve better manure application and protect water quality?***

**Final FG components** [13']

5-10 minute summary by local cooperator.

***Is that an adequate summary? Is there anything important that we missed?***

Reiterate purpose of study, why we are gathered today (2-3 sentences)

***Is there anything else you would like to say about manure application issues, such as barriers, concerns, solutions, or education?***

Alright then, thank you very much . . .