Farmer training programs offered

Agriculture is one of the more regulated industries. These regulations increase the cost of farming, and unlike other industries, farmers are unable to pass these costs onto the consumer. If the cost is too high, farmers go out of business, particularly small farms.

Many of these regulations are required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. States are often responsible for enforcing these regulations and are required to submit an implementation plan for EPA approval. The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) is responsible for many of the implementation plans for farm regulations.

A Private Pesticide Applicator License is part of the pesticide implementation plan, which farmers must obtain to apply restricted-use pesticides. Farmers are required to pass a test on pesticide safety and use, and in at least one category.

Categories include grain and cereal crops, forage crops and livestock, fruit and vegetable crops, nursery and forest crops, greenhouse crops, and furmigation.

The license has to be renewed every three years by completing three hours of continuing education. Most farmers complete these hours during the winter months when they are not involved with field operations.

The recertification hours must include at least one hour in core, which is an umbrella term for general pesticide safety, use, and regulations. The remaining two hours include training in the specialization categories.

In addition to pesticide regulations, farmers also have fertilizer regulations. They must have obtained an Agriculture Fertilizer Applicator Certification to apply nitrogen and phosphorus to farm fields.

Lime applications, and starter fertilizer with planting equipment are not regulated. Lime contains calcium and magnesium, which are not a water quality concern.

Starter fertilizers applied with seed planters use small amounts of nutrients to avoid seed injury and are generally incorporated, thus are not a water quality concern.

Farmers have to complete a three-hour training course or pass a written examination for the fertilizer certification. During the training, farmers received information on algae blooms in Lake Erie, the importance of soil testing for nutrient management, and management practices to reduce nutrient loss from farm fields, particularly phosphorus.

Farmers are required to take continuing education hours every three years to renew their fertilizer certification. Many farmers have both a Private Pesticide Applicator License and a Fertilizer Applicator Certification.

For these farmers, ODA has synchronized the renewal year for their pesticide license and fertilizer certificate.

Ohio State University Extension is responsible for providing the continuing education for these regulatory programs in each county. Agriculture Extension educators are given research updates each year to develop tailored training programs for their given counties. As a result, training may vary from county to county.

However, all Extension programs will emphasize effective management strategies that enhance crop productivity, encourage responsible use of pesticides and fertilizer products, and promote safe practices for applicators, the general public, and the environment.

OSU Extension-Hancock County will offer a morning and evening program for farmers to renew their Private Pesticide Applicator License and Fertilizer Applicator Certification. The morning program will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Jan. 22 and the evening program from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. March 21.

The January program will be in the Great Hall at First Presbyterian Church, 2330 S. Main St., Findlay. The March program will be at the Hancock County Agricultural Service Center, 7688 Hancock County 140, Findlay, unless pre-registration is large, then it will be moved to First Presbyterian.

The fertilizer training will be the first hour of each program for farmers who only need fertilizer recertification. Pesticide training will be the last three hours for farmers who only need pesticide recertification.

For only the pesticide training, the registration fee is $35, and for only the fertilizer training, the registration fee is $10. A $5 discount will be given for individuals taking both training programs.

Pre-registration is requested by calling the Hancock County Extension Office, 419-422-3851 or email lentz.38@osu.edu.

Individuals who pre-register a week before the pesticide program will be given a copy of the 2019 Ohio Weed Guide. Payment for the training can be made at the door by check or cash.

Farmers who have conflicts with the Hancock County dates can attend training sessions in other counties. Dates and locations of these meetings may be found at https://pested.osu.edu/privatecetification.

Lentz is extension educator for agriculture and natural resources for the Ohio State University Extension Service in Hancock County. He can be reached at 419-422-3851 or via email at lentz.38@osu.edu.

Lentz can be heard with Van Wickerham on weekdays at 6:35 a.m. on WPIN, at 5:43 a.m. on WKXK-FM, and at 5:28 a.m. at 106.3 The Fox.