



Steve Evert (above) of Evert Farms talks about becoming a no till expert on his demonstration plot for the Sunflower Celebration on Friday morning. Jeanne Falk (right), Kansas State Agronomist, and Brian Olson, K-State northwest area agronomist, show examples of the different developmental stages in the growth of sunflowers. Photos by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News



Tour gives sunflower information to growers

By Pat Schiefen
The Goodland Star-News

Farmers and others interested in sunflowers toured fields of the flowers to hear about the advantages of till and no-till planting, watering, pests and the stages of plant development during the 2006 Sunflower Celebration Friday morning.

Lynn Holting, general manager of Mueller Grain, and chairman of the High Plains Region of the National Sunflower Organization, welcomed almost 100 people at the event.

Jeanne Falk, area agronomist in Goodland for Kansas State Univer-

sity Research and Extension, talked about the growth stages of sunflowers, from the emergence to reproductive stages and full maturity. Brian Olson, K-State northwest area agronomist from Colby, talked about strip tilling in sunflowers.

The group was first taken to Evert Farms, about three miles south of Northern Sun on Sherman County Road 14. Steve Evert said he had become a no till expert, sometimes learning by his mistakes. He said he also found out that planting when the ground is wet doesn't work well.

He said he plants medium-sized seed. Because sunflowers have such a big seed, he said, they need

some moisture to come up.

Ron Meyer, Colorado State University area agronomist in Burlington, talked about the water requirements for sunflowers. He said since sunflowers are native to this region, they tolerate heat and drought well.

Sunflowers can have roots as long as six feet, he said. They don't need to be watered before the seed heads develop. When the seeds are forming, he said, is when they use the water, adding that sunflowers fall between wheat and corn for their water requirements.

Meyer talked about planting sunflowers after wheat or corn. He said

the sunflowers will use any leftover fertilizer from previous crops. Nitrogen is the key fertilizer, he said, and phosphorous has a much smaller impact. When asked by Frank Sowers of Bird City if "micronutrients" such as copper and zinc help, Meyer said he hasn't found those to help yield.

Falk and Olson talked about insect pests. Evert said his field was planted after June 1 to cut down on head moth infestations. Falk said fields are more prone to head moth infestations if planted before June 1. A form of Rhizopus head rot can show up after problems with head moths, she said, and head rot can

destroy a field.

J.P. Michaud, K-State entomologist, talked about other insect pests, such as gray and red seed weevils. He said both eat the seeds and drop to the ground to winter.

The weevils and other pest will survive winter in crop residue or especially in wild sunflowers, he said. Controlling weeds and wild sunflowers around a field help control pests.

Both oil and confectionery varieties of sunflowers were talked about.

People at the conference ate cinnamon rolls and coffee or tea going to the fields on the Goodland School

District activity bus.

The dryland plot were by the Northern Sun plant at Caruso, west of Goodland. Representative from DeKalb, Fontanelle Hybrids, Garst Seed Co., Mycogen Seeds, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Red River Commodities, Seeds 2000, SunOpta Sunflower and Triumph Seed Co. were on the tour.

Marti Affoun, a writer from American Profile magazine, came from Columbia, Mo., to get interviews for a story in the magazine, which is inserted into The Goodland Star-News each week.

Spraying shoulders save graders

By Tom Betz
The Goodland Star-News

Sherman County commissioners heard Tuesday that a test program of spraying weeds along the shoulders of county roads has worked well enough to reduce grading cost.

Curt Way, public works manager, said that 226 miles of county road were sprayed by the county obnoxious weed department, and that it has held the weeds down.

"I let the guy pick the roads," Way said. "We put five tanks of chemical on with (weed control supervisor) Daryl West's bigger truck."

"The cost of everything was \$19.70 per mile. It has held the weeds down."

"Some places were harder where the amaranth was thicker. I'm not sure what the actual savings was, but it is better and you can see the difference."

"Do we need to do two separate

trucks?" Commissioner Chuck Thomas asked.

"We are not going to be able to get all of the weeds — amaranth and goat heads — because we only have about three weeks when you can get them sprayed," Way said.

"The problem is the winds, and then not knowing when you are going to get rain. It costs about \$90 to run a grader per mile."

"I think the truck has some problems. We can try it for one more year, and start earlier to see if it really works. Then maybe get another rig."

Commissioner Mitch Tiede said maybe the spray truck could be brought in and worked on over the winter.

Thomas said a problem with spraying rigs is they sit for a long time between uses.

Tiede suggested putting a skirt on the rig to allow the chemicals to be

sprayed in higher winds.

Way said they started on County Road 57, and the spraying did help.

However, he said they did not have the Vanquish, a weed growth control chemical, mixed in and the weeds came back.

Way said the spraying stopped the ragweed and turned it a different color.

"When the guys bladed, it fell apart easier," he said.

Commissioner Kevin Rasure said he wanted to see the spraying continue.

Tiede asked about spraying pre-

emergent chemicals on the roads in the winter or spring.

"We can't get too aggressive," Thomas said.

"If we hit it too hard and then get a big rain, it could wash the chemical down and might cause other problems."

Way agreed, saying the best thing is to control the weeds and keep them down, but they want some cover to hold the ground and keep it from washing out.

corrections

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