

IPM courses gain momentum

By Trevor Johnston

The Australian Cotton Cooperative Research Centre has embarked on a major extension program involving integrated pest management (IPM).

Details of the program were outlined on the Web On Wednesday video segment on CSD's website on the internet (www.csd.net.au) by Bill Dalton, IPM training coordinator with the CRC and QDPI.

Bill said the program comprised a series of five-day short courses divided into several segments:

- A two-day conference held indoors in winter;
- An early season field day;
- A further field day later in the cropping season; and,
- A review meeting after harvest.

The short course concept follows three pilot courses held last season at Trangie in the Macquarie Valley, at the ACRI at Narrabri in the Lower Namoi, and at Dalby.

Bill said the schedule this season involved eight to 10 courses, starting in Central Queensland, and moving through Queensland and NSW to the Hillston region.

"Shortly, we will be distributing an IPM course brochure to every grower in the industry advising them of the five-day course and its contents.

"Within the brochure will be an 'expression of interest' form they can fill out and return to their local CRC Industry Development Officer. Basically, we require interest from 12-15 growers," Bill said.

The initial two-day conference is attended by research personnel and comprises a mix of practical exercises and discussion.

Components of the first field day include an



Interested attendees at one of the IPM pilot courses.

examination of early season pests and beneficials, and some plant mapping as it pertains to that time of the year.

The latter field day re-examines the complete pest and beneficials complex, plant mapping, cut-out and final irrigation, in the IPM context.

The review meeting covers a seasonal post mortem, an analysis of actions taken and their impact and results, and a discussion of the major issues arising during the season.

Following are some comments from people who attended the pilot courses:

- Peter Schuurs, Millmerran.

"We felt we had to find an alternative way of doing things, apart from continually bombing our crops with chemicals on a seven to eight day turnaround. The course helped me gain a much fuller understanding of what is happening in our crop, and to better manage our crop from a more holistic point of view."

- Stuart Higgins, Jandowae.

"I got involved in the course, thinking that there has to be a better way forward. I think the benefits from it are going back and speaking to my neighbours that are not involved in the course. It is a good way for them to find out what the cutting edge researchers are doing, and it is just a great way to pass the information down through the farming community."

- George Nason, Yandilla.

"It's been a great benefit. I've learnt more about my crop. I've lived in my crop more this summer than I ever have before, and I am able to communicate better with my agronomist as a result."

- Andrew Gill, Narromine.

"I think the main things I have got out of it are how IPM can work, and probably will work, and a lot about plant mapping. I have also got to know a lot more people around the valley, and seen a lot more of the valley."

- Vicki Tuck, Narromine.

"We got a better knowledge of what you are actually looking for at different stages of the crop, and so we were able to go in there and

make more informed decisions, and be more aware of where our agronomist was coming from. We were also able to make a better input into the insect and spray rating that our agronomist was using.”

- Geoff McKay, Warren.

“I did this course because I wanted to have a better understanding of IPM in most aspects of growing cotton, especially the spraying side of it, including different spray technologies. I found it very enjoyable, and a great introduction to IPM.”

- Sue McCutcheon, Narromine.

“Cotton has a reputation of being detrimental to the environment, so I decided there had to be something to learn. I learnt a heap from the course. It has been wonderful. It’s really hands-on. I’ve gained knowledge that probably would have taken me 10 years to gain, and I’ve gained it in one season.”

For further information contact Bill Dalton

07 4671 6715.