

# Courses help farmers, ranchers turn profits

By Michael Lovell  
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POCATELLO — In the midst of slumping agriculture and livestock prices, farming experts are preparing a series of courses to help farmers better run their operations from the ground up.

Now entering its second year, the Western Integrated Resource Education courses teach farmers and livestock operators how to make the best out of what they have and plan for the future.

"A lot of farmers are saying 'It doesn't matter how much I produce. I can't make ends meet,'" University of Idaho Agricultural Extension Agent Reed Findlay said. "These classes go back and begin where you should begin, like setting goals and inventorying resources."

The classes, which begin Monday and run twice weekly for the next three weeks, come as commodities prices have been ravaged by overproduction and slackening demand.

"Everything we've ever done is operational, and we've left out tactical planning and strategic planning," Findlay said. "With the economic turmoil in their life, one thing they ought to do is take a step back.

"Doing the same things they've always

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## FARM CLASSES

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■ Classes are scheduled to begin Monday and will be held Tuesday, Jan. 18, Jan. 19, Jan. 25 and Jan. 26. Deadline for registration is Thursday.

The cost is \$200 per operation. Family members and hired help are encouraged to attend.

The classes will be held in either Soda Springs or Downey, depending on which location is most convenient for most participants.

Classes will be taught by six extension agents with expertise in various areas.

For more information, please call Reed Findlay at 236-7312 or Bear Lake Extension Educator Joel Packham at 945-2265.

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done and expecting a different result is my definition of insanity," he said.

Farmers who attended the program last year praise the classes, saying that while conditions are tough, they'd be worse off

without the training.

James and Shannon Hardcastle, who have 400 head of cattle and grow hay and grain on 5,000 acres near Montpelier, say the program gave them strong ideas for improvement.

"Boy, it gave us a lot in the few weeks we were there," Hardcastle said. "The main thing that has helped us is to set goals and prioritize, then figure the best way we can make a living in today's market situation."

Roy Dunford, a ranch manager on the Tom Blotter Ranch near Bear Lake, said the ranch switched to fall calving and fertilizing pastures after the course.

"It really worked for us," he said. "In the last year or two, it's been a losing money situation. I don't think it'll be as bad this year as it would have been without the changes."

Findlay said that's what the program is all about.

"We start from the beginning. We don't just twink around with fertilizer," Findlay said. "We can calculate how much money it will cost to put kids through school. If that's your goal, let's try to see how we can make that possible."

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