

Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator

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UNL Expands CropWatch with Production of Podcast

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension has been sharing the latest information on crop production and research through a resource known as CropWatch since 1992. CropWatch originally started as a printed newsletter, but the newsletter could only be released a few times per season because of the logistics of printing and mailing new issues.

Katy Moore, a communications specialist with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said that one of the missions of CropWatch is to share timely and relevant information with agricultural producers throughout the state. As such, the expansion of the internet was viewed as a tremendous opportunity, “CropWatch’s website was launched in 1996 to provide easier access so that farmers across the entire state could benefit from CropWatch’s resources,” said Moore.

While the website had the benefit of being easier to access, it also allowed for sharing information faster, “When farmers are dealing with a new or unknown crop issue, they need fast answers,” explained Moore, “Our goal is also to be as timely as possible.” Currently, the CropWatch website publishes a new issue of articles every week during the cropping season and shifts to every two weeks during the winter months.

Since its initial launch, the way that many consume information has changed. While reading articles is still an important way that many keep up with the latest information, many people now get their news from videos, podcasts, and social media. In fact, research from the Pew Research Center has shown that 23% of people at least sometimes get their news from podcasts.

To stay relevant, the university launched the Nebraska CropWatch Podcast in 2018. Now starting its fifth season, the podcast aims to highlight articles published on the website in audio form in a bi-weekly format. The host of the podcast, Nate Dorsey, interviews the authors of recent articles, often allowing them to share more information and stories than could be included in the original articles. “I try to keep the interviews as conversational as possible,” said Dorsey, “this hopefully makes the information and guests more relatable and easier to listen to.”



Podcasts are particularly useful in agriculture, said Dorsey, “Farmers and others in the agriculture industry spend a lot of time behind the windshield”, he noted, “whether that’s driving a truck or a tractor, podcasts are a great way to learn and stay up-to-date while working on other tasks.” Dorsey hopes that the podcast will be a valuable source of information to producers and others throughout the state.

The Nebraska CropWatch Podcast can be found on most major podcast platforms, such as Apple’s Podcasts app, Spotify, iHeart Radio, and many others. A suggested best practice is to search for a show, in this case the Nebraska CropWatch Podcast, in your preferred application and click the subscribe or follow show button. This way, as new content is released, you can be notified of new episodes and have them download automatically to your device. Then, no matter where you are or what you’re working on, you can learn about the latest Nebraska crop production information.