Field Day
By Mark Watson, Panhandle No Till Educator

We had a field day at our farm in late May and I felt it was time well spent for everyone who attended. We had a nice turnout of around 25 producers who met for informal discussion on all aspects of no till crop production. I thought everyone enjoyed the morning together and look forward to more of these informal field days.

I wanted to visit with you about a couple of mistakes I made with weed control, fertilization, and water management this year prior to planting our edible bean crop. We had a field this year where cattle were grazing the corn stalks when we would normally apply our fertilizer for the edible bean crop.

We generally like to fertilize earlier in the spring when the soil surface is dry and the temperatures are cool. We apply our nitrogen using a solution of 32-0-0 which we spray on with our sprayer. We try to time this application prior to predicted rainfall. Because of the cattle grazing we were unable to apply the fertilizer at this time.

We also had light weed pressure in the field, so we delayed our burndown till planting. Even though the weeds were small, 1-2 inches in height, they were large enough and concentrated enough that we were unable to get our beans into ideal moisture since we delayed the burndown application. We sprayed the weeds after planting and also applied our fertilizer with a separate operation. Fortunately it rained heavily right after the fertilizer application, giving us good seed moisture and moving the fertilizer into the soil. If we hadn't gotten lucky we would have been forced to turn on the center pivot and irrigate to get soil moisture for the bean seeds and incorporate the fertilizer.

I don't like to use the irrigation water for anything other than watering the crops for production. It's wasteful to irrigate because of poor weed management and fertilization. From now on we will kill the small weeds before they utilize the moisture in the top couple of inches where we plant, and will fertilize earlier in the year to get the fertilizer in the soil prior to planting.

We have been wet around the Panhandle since the first of June. Our farm has received 3.4 inches of moisture so far in June at the time of this writing, with additional rain in the forecast. This brings our total for the year to 8.8 inches. Normal by the end of June is about 8.6 inches. So far this year we have put 2.25 inches of moisture on our winter wheat and none on our corn and bean crops.