

Webinar helps with irrigation scheduling

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A new webinar series offered by University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension helps producers make irrigation scheduling decisions based on data from soil water monitoring equipment.

Irrigation scheduling can conserve water and money, but many producers do not feel comfortable making scheduling decisions based on data from soil water monitoring equipment.

When Steve Melvin, Extension educator in Frontier County, found this out, he decided to develop a webinar series that would walk producers through the step-by-step process of making irrigation scheduling decisions based on soil water monitoring data.

“The idea is I will just go through and show my decision-making process based on the data and a chart system I am using, something we’ve developed over the past few years,” Melvin said. “The videos show how to use (the charts), but more importantly how to look at data and make soil monitoring-based irrigation decisions based on it.”

Melvin posted his first video the first week of July and will continue to post weekly videos until irrigation season ends around early September.

In the videos, he discusses irrigation scheduling based on the week’s soil moisture readings for two corn fields on the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture’s Learning Farm in Curtis.

Each week, Melvin walks viewers through a series of charts that help determine how much water should be added to the soil based on the soil water monitoring data.

The irrigation capacity for the test fields allow for application of about 2 inches of water per week or about 5.5 gpm/acre, and Curtis is in a 20 inches per year rainfall zone. However, Melvin provides information for a variety of crops, soil capacities and other variables.

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For information on irrigation scheduling and to view the soil water monitoring webinar, visit cropwatch.unl.edu and look under Irrigation Management in the center of the page. Also visit the Optimum Irrigation Through Soil Water Monitoring page on Facebook.