

David Rueber, A Record of Excellent Service

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David Rueber retired as superintendent of the ISU Northern Research Farm, Kanawha, Iowa, November 2013. He started at the farm in 1977 as a technician and became superintendent in 1987. He was the sixth and longest serving superintendent since the farm opened in 1934.

Rueber was exemplary in his hard work, service, and commitment at the Northern Research Farm. He was meticulous in his management of the farm and the many research plots. We estimate he worked with more than 50,000 plots during his career.

The Northern Research Farm is the oldest ISU research site outside of Ames. It is home to some of ISU's longest-running continuous field experiments. For example, the Northern Research Farm has a long-term rotation study that started in 1954–60 years ago. These long-term studies are challenging and Rueber was a master at managing them.

For eight years, Bernie Havlovic, now superintendent at the ISU Armstrong Research Farm, Lewis, Iowa, worked with Rueber at the Northern Research Farm. Havlovic said, "During this time, many improvements were made to the farm's facilities. Without Dave's hard work, efforts, and ideas, these accomplishments would not have been possible. Dave brought to the job an excellent work ethic and a keen understanding of how to conduct field research. These attributes earned Dave the trust and respect of many researchers, extension specialists, and local ag producers."

Rueber remembers how things have changed at the research farm. In a recent interview with Jean Caspers-Simmet of AgriNews, Rueber commented on corn harvest. "When I first came, we hand picked all the yield plots," Rueber said. "We'd wear a belt that had two hooks to hold a gunny sack. Earlier in fall, we'd measure off the harvest area, two rows, 16 ft long in the middle of the plot. We'd count the number of ears, barren plants, and double plants. Each plot had a tag that we put in the sack with corn."

The corn was stored on a flat rack in the shed and on rainy days they shelled corn. "We had a one-hole corn sheller that ran on an electric motor," Rueber said. "One guy would feed ears into the sheller, and the other guy would weigh it. To get moisture, we'd weigh out 300 grams and put it in little sacks. We took those to Ames where they dried them. Then we'd reweigh them and figure the moisture. In 1981, we got a John Deere 3300 combine. I was in back with a bucket and the scale and the little sacks for moisture samples. I'd catch the grain in a bucket and weigh it. We had a hand-held moisture meter. We'd take the samples into the shop and run them for moisture."

The Northern Research Farm has been the site of numerous experiments related to soil fertility. Rueber remembers working with John Webb, Randy Killorn, as well as current professors Antonio Mallarino and John Sawyer. Many of the Iowa potassium and phosphorus fertilizer recommendations are based on research from the Northern Research Farm conducted by Rueber.

We wish Dave and his wife Carol the best in retirement and thank them for many years of service to agriculture in north central Iowa.