

# Corey Thompson:

## Building Relationships in the Pest Control Industry

by Mindy DeRohan, CAPCA ED Manager

Corey Thompson grew-up in Northern California and received his Associate Degree at Shasta College. He then graduated from Chico State in 2003 with a degree in Agriculture Science and proceeded to earn his agriculture teaching credential.

Corey has been involved in the pest management industry for 11 years. For the past eight years he has worked for Basin Fertilizer and Chemical Company. Prior to working for Basin Fertilizer, Corey worked for the UC Cooperative Extension as a staff research assistant. It was Corey's experiences with the cooperative extension that motivated him to become a PCA. "While working at the UC Cooperative Extension, I was given the task of organizing off-site grower trials which led to larger trails and eventually a PCA career."

In this current role, Corey oversees an area on the east side of the Klamath Basin all the way to Valley Falls, Oregon through Lakeview and down to Cedarville and Alturas, California. He inherited this area from James Baird, a salesman for more than 20 years. Basin Fertilizer and Chemical Company is a full-service company dealing in crop, pest, and agronomic consulting, fertilizer, chemical sales application, irrigation water management and GPS guidance systems. Corey represents more than 380 customers throughout his territory and specializes in alfalfa and cool season grasses.

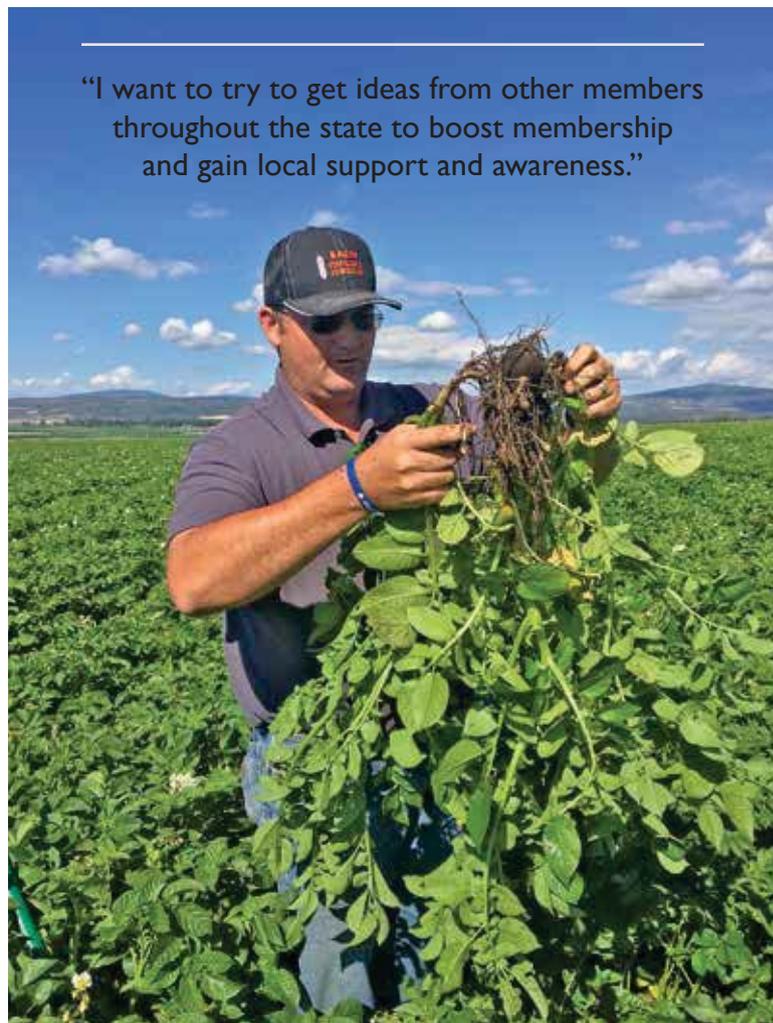
"Being outside and working with growers on a daily basis is my favorite part of being a PCA," Corey said. "I'm a people person and I love the problem solving aspect of the job. Being able to disseminate a water or soil sample and look at the grower's situation and trying to guide them in the direction that benefits them as well as the crop and seeing out how things work out is a great joy."

When asked about his most challenging pest management experience, Corey said it is working with specific issues of the grower and trying to match a solution that benefits them the most. "Canada thistle seems to be one of our hardest weeds and as long as we are in a pasture setting things generally work out, but when it is in alfalfa or other broadleaf forage, it gets very tricky," Corey said.

Corey believes that chemical resistance on all levels from insecticides and herbicides will be the biggest concern for the industry. "I don't believe that one pest can have a broad reach on the industry, especially in the diverse state of California. Region by region, yes, we all have our certain pests, but the issue of resistance to pests should be of concern to all PCAs."

The experience that Corey has gained throughout the years as a PCA, along with the contacts that he has made in the industry, are what motivates him to make

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decisions for his clients. "Working for a small family-owned business that is not solely focused on sales gives us the opportunity to bounce ideas around and work together," Corey said.

Corey said that he works to educate his clients and growers on a daily basis. "Being a younger PCA, many of my clients have been in this game a lot longer - they teach me as much as I teach them." Corey works to advise his clients on the best options available, but ultimately, it is his customer who makes the pest management decisions.

When asked about a specific pest management problem, the challenges and how it was resolved, Corey said they had a big problem in the spring of 2015 with the blue alfalfa aphid. "The pest has shown resistance to the conventional treatment methods and we were seeing significant infestations and yield loss due to the pest. We worked with local agricultural commissioners and Farm Advisors along with PCAs on different ways to deal with

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**CAPCA Chapter:**  
*Tri County*

**Education:** *Shasta College, CSU Chico*

**Family:** *wife, Monica, children Macey (8) and Caelor (5)*

**Interests:**  
*Camping, Waterfowling, Classic Cars, Barbecues*

this new pest. A new chemical was released that we set up test plots with that also included alternative and conventional treatment methods. We worked diligently and were able to eventually control the blue alfalfa aphid.”

Just like with the blue alfalfa aphid example, Corey turns to the other PCAs and the Cooperative Extension for areas that he does not have expertise. “CAPCA’s networking has given me opportunities to meet a variety of representatives from a myriad of pest control companies as well as other PCAs with whom I have built relationships and am comfortable calling on with questions or for advice,” Corey said. The biggest highlight of his career has been being trusted and valued as a PCA and this comes with the relationships he has built.

When asked to describe IPM, Corey said that IPM is just part of the job. “The nuclear option is never the first option. We pride ourselves in religious field scouting and keeping in touch with our growers. When pests are identified all treatment options are reviewed and vetted before a chemical recommendation is made.”

In Corey’s region, they are using more and more Roundup Ready alfalfa. This new technology has become a great tool for the Tri-Counties area with lack of rotational crops or alternatives to a forage grain rotation. “With some special weed situations, the rotation with Roundup Ready alfalfa allows us to address the weeds during the alfalfa cycle and

keep the grains as clean as possible,” Corey said.

When asked what the most challenging part of trying to educate his growers and the public is, Corey said, “it is getting to know your grower on a level that lets you talk to them and share ideas about new ideas and technologies. Educating the public can sometimes be a little bit frustrating because of the disconnect that the public has with where their food comes from. From time to time, you have to take a step back and try to put yourself in their shoes.”

To improve his own professionalism, Corey tries to attend different grower/industry meetings during the off-season to learn about different management techniques to share with his growers and clients. One of Corey’s goals has been to grow the Tri County CAPCA Chapter. “I want to try to get ideas from other members throughout the state to boost membership and gain local support and awareness,” Corey said.

Besides serving on the CAPCA Board for his chapter, Corey serves on the Board of Directors for the Klamath County Soil and Water Conservation District and the local California Deer Association Committee. In addition to his PCA license, Corey also holds a CCA certificate and an Oregon Consulting License. 🌱

