

Increasing Profits With Total Farm Weed Control

By Edward Stroube
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Weeds cost the farmers of our state untold millions of dollars annually. Conservative estimates are that weeds cause an average yield reduction of 4 to 5 bushels per acre in soybeans and 2 to 3 bushels per acre in corn. At today's prices, this adds up to more than \$125 million. Add to this the value of yield reductions of wheat, sugarbeets, hay crops,

pastures, and other crops and the total loss approaches \$200 million.

Don't stop at this point! Now add the machinery wear caused by running the tons of extra material through harvesting equipment, the reduction in the quality of produce, and the marketing dockage of contaminated product.

The total loss turns out to be in excess of \$250 million annually.

All of this loss in addition to what is now being done for controlling weeds such as the application of herbicides, pre- and post-planting tillage, mowing, and in some cases, hand weeding.

Cost to the farmer? Not entirely! Weeds cost the producer and the consumer. Any cost of production is ultimately partially reflected in a cost to the consumer. Therefore weeds are expensive to each of us.

As indicated, weeds compete with all and contaminate most crops. Even though much effort is expended for the control of weeds, seldom is maximum effort given to control of weeds throughout the rotation and on the entire farm and surroundings. This maximum effort is a necessity if total weed control is to be achieved.

Not only must the farmer be concerned, but the highway departments, the utility companies, the ditch maintenance supervisors, and all others responsible for the maintenance of non-cropland areas must present a unified effort to approach a zero weed loss environment.

And this does not mean for only one or two years. It must be continued indefinitely. If no weeds were allowed to reach maturity and none introduced for five or six consecutive years in a relatively large area, the weed problems would be greatly diminished. To approach the zero mark, 10 to 20 years will be required, depending on the weed species present and the cropping and tillage practices used.

The farmer must utilize every available tool in combatting weeds if he is to succeed in the total weed control approach. This will have to be with all crops

each year and even in his fencerows, waterways and other non-crop areas.

On the non-crop areas, there is a choice of several materials to control annual and perennial broadleaf weeds and brush species. Some of these are Banvel, 2, 4-D, Amitrole, Pramitol, Tordon, Tandex, Hyvar, AmmateX, Silvex, 2, 4, 5-T, 2, 4-DP, Roundup and others.

Do not use materials for total vegetation control (soil sterilants) if grasses are desired in the non-crop areas. In fact, one good control for the foxtails in fencerows is to seed a desirable grass such as brome grass. Eventually the seeded species will crowd out the foxtails.

Herbicide Makes the Difference

Well-managed pastures; i.e. proper species, good fertilization, rotational grazing, clipping on schedule, etc., often do not need a herbicide to control weeds. However, on anything less than well-managed grass pastures, a herbicide such as Banvel or 2, 4-D usually is required to

eliminate broadleaf weeds.

Much research has been conducted in Ohio and adjacent states on controlling weeds in crop rotations. In most instances, a combination of tillage practices and herbicides is the most successful approach. Tillage operations, such as plowing, disking, cultivating, rotary hoeing, etc., all are effective weed control practices if done in time and properly, but in most instances do not result in total control. Other crop management practices such as fertility programs, rate of seeding, time of planting, and selection of varieties, alter the weed situation.

The selection of a herbicide for a particular situation is no easy task. Consider the weed species, the degree of infestation, the desirable species within the target area and in the adjacent areas, the crop rotation, the soil type, and any other factors which may alter the selection possibilities.

Use only the materials and rates approved for the situation and follow ex-

actly the label on method and timing of application. Know the strengths and the limitations of each herbicide which is a candidate for the situation.

In many situations, a combination of two or more herbicides is required to result in the best weed control. Again, timely operations are essential for good weed control. Don't Program failures - prevent them!

If a producer is doing a good job of total weed control and the highway and utility rights-of-way, or even an adjacent landowner's acreage are consistent sources of reinfestation, use influence - political, legal, "charm" or otherwise - to eliminate these sources.

For a total weed control concept to be successful, it must be operated on an area or regional basis and everyone must realize the cost of weeds. Anything short of this will revert back to somewhere near the \$250 million loss in crops in Ohio due to weeds.

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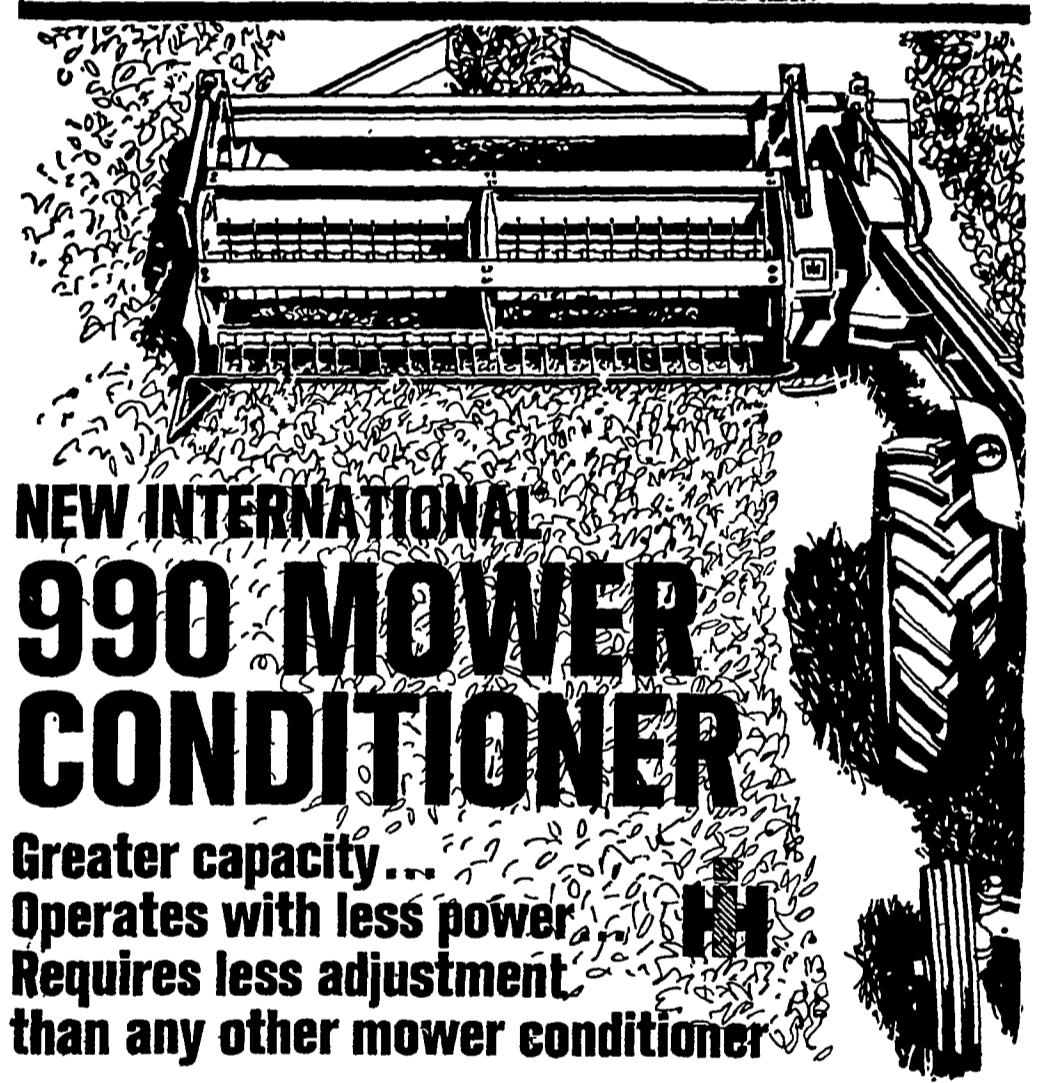
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