

Specialists speak on herbicides

Several top growers in the corn belt, university weed specialists, and a manufacturer's agronomist were questioned about herbicide buying methods. Not surprisingly, they were in agreement on many important factors concerning herbicide purchasing tactics. Compare your own skills to those outlined below, and maybe you can pick up some important tips to sharpen your herbicide buying skills.

Two weed specialists, Dr. William B. Duke, Professor of Agronomy at Cornell University, and Dr. Fred Slife, Agronomy Professor at the University of Illinois were questioned for their views on this important topic. Also contracted was Dr. Douglas R. Murphy, agronomist at Stauffer Chemical Company, for feedback from the manufacturers' viewpoint. Growers questioned were: Loyd Hall, Kenney, Illinois corn and soybean grower who won the Ford efficiency award in 1974 for the top state corn yield of 267.42 bushels per acre, Gerald Tarnow, of Rolling Prairie, Indiana, who won the same award for soybean production, and LeRoy Thompson, Iowa Master Corn Growing District Champ.

When Should A Grower Decide Which Herbicides To Use Next Year On Corn And Soybeans:

Duke: "During the latter part of the growing season of the previous year. Deciding at that time will allow the grower to have a better idea of what problems he's likely to have the next year."

Slife: "From midseason to harvest time for the following year."

Hall: "Well, I try to experiment and find chemicals that will do the job, and when I find them I stick with them. Now I use Vernam in soybeans, and Sutan plus on corn. I moved to these thiocarbamates because they control some really tough weeds like nut-sedge. We don't have to

worry about crop damage with Sutan plus since they added the safener. I order around harvest time."

Tarnow: "I keep maps on all aspects of my farm's production. My weed maps are really detailed so I know where, when and how bad each species is troubling me. Then I buy the right chemicals at harvest time."

Thompson: "I wait until after the harvest, when the state recommendations come out. I choose on the basis of the weeds I have and what the state recommends."

What Should Be The Order Of Priority For: Price, Effectiveness, Safety, Mixing Ease, And Service Provided By Dealer?

Duke: "While the grower may rate price very high on the priority scale, effectiveness has to be number one. Safety should be next, followed by mixing ease, and I would put price last."

Slife: "A grower should first determine what weeds he wants to control. Therefore price shouldn't be important, but effectiveness must be. Then I'd put dealer services, safety and mixing ease."

Hall: "Effectiveness is number one, because a cheap chemical won't save money if it doesn't work. The only problem is getting the chemical after it's ordered. Some chemical availability is tight."

Tarnow: "Price is important, but you have to look at herbicides in terms of weather and stress conditions, ease of handling and timing of application. I'll spend more time applying a chemical if I know it will work well."

Murphy: "Effectiveness has to be number one, because if a grower has a problem he has to choose the right herbicide to control it. If there are two or more equally matched chemicals in terms of performance, then the economics of the

situation call for him to then compare in terms of price."

What After-The-Sale Service Should Be Offered By Local Dealer?

Duke: "A grower should make sure that the dealer is unbiased and will define the effectiveness of the materials for specific problems. The dealer should also outline the place where the chemicals fit into the growers cropping pattern. He should examine the grower's operation in terms of planting factors, rotation methods, etc., and then consider safety factors and make growers aware of restrictions in the use of the specific chemicals."

Slife: "We should expect the dealer to know what herbicides are effective on different soil types and to suggest a program for the farmer. He has to be an expert in this area because of competition."

Hall: "I buy from a fertilizer dealer who knows my farm pretty well. As a

matter of fact, if he knew it any better he'd be farming it himself. One thing I'd like to see them offer is detailed soil testing. Right now they test for N.K. and P for \$8 per sample, but I spent \$37,000 in fertilizer last year, and I think they should offer a complete soil analysis for micro-nutrients along with that."

Tarnow: "I'd like to see some follow-up from the dealer or manufacturer if the stuff doesn't work."

Murphy: "It's important for a dealer to know his products well enough so he can advise growers. He should be unbiased and transfer his more detailed knowledge to the grower. For example: 'Stauffer offers a guarantee performance program for its Sutan plus, Sutan plus with atrazine, Dyfonate and Vernam pesticides. Simply, a grower need only keep a 1/4 acre check strip in each field, and a Stauffer representative

will verify the claim of possible nonperformance and authorize equal replacement of products used."

Would You Like To See Any Additions, Deletions Or Other Changes To Labels?

Duke: "The only problem I see with labels is that too many weeds can be placed there that are questionably controlled."

Slife: "They are sometimes difficult to interpret by many people."

Hall: "No, they are pretty straightforward and comprehensive, and growers should know their operations and soil conditions well enough to follow the label directions." "I'd like to see more time available between application and incorporation for the

preplant, soil incorporated herbicides. For the past few years I've combined application and incorporation, but I'll be planting more acreage this year and will bring in a custom applicator. They use a 40 ft. boom and travel pretty fast. Chances are I won't be able to keep up to them when I disk, and some of the chemical will volatilize before I can incorporate it. It would be better if we could have more time."

Tarnow: "They are pretty clear, you just have to educate the farmer to read and follow them."

Murphy: "We try to make them as simple as

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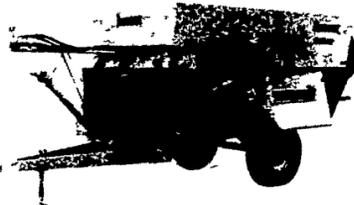
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