

Granular pesticides preferred

MARIETTA, Pa. - Last year Dave and Dwight Hess made two significant changes in applying their herbicides that they claim is faster, more efficient, and requires much less fuss. They are now applying granular herbicides and insuring their effectiveness through incorporation.

"In the past, we have used surface applied materials and usually had good control, however it is possible for control to slip when it is too dry after application," says Dwight, the younger of the two brothers. "We are particularly happy that we started incorporating this year since there was a dry spell after planting. Because of it, some farmers who used pre-emergence surface applied herbicides got caught with some early weed problems, but we got pretty good early control."

When a herbicide is applied before planting and incorporated, the net result is good weed control when it is needed most: at the time the crop starts growing. Incorporation adds the extra insurance that the chemical will be uniformly mixed into the soil at the right time and at the right depth for maximum performance.

"Weather conditions seem to play a big role in a herbicide's performance," notes Dwight. "Take wind for example: if it's windy at planting time - and it was real windy this year - it can hold up spraying or cause bad drifting problems. This is especially true in custom application where the spray booms are high off the ground. However, because of granular chemicals, we didn't have any problems with wind-drift this year," Dwight points out.

According to this young Lancaster County grower, granular applications are the most convenient way to go. During planting he can incorporate 20 acres before refilling the applicator boxes, and it only takes five minutes to refill. All you have to do is open the bag, pour it in the box, and go - no mixing to do, no water to haul, and no nozzle clogging problems. Maintenance is easier with a granular applicator too, especially clean-out. In fact, due to the ease of operation with this present set-up, the Hesses did some custom work for several area farmers.

The Hesses have a 14 foot Gandy applicator which mounts in front of a disc harrow for incorporation. This equipment, like many other applicators, is versatile and can be used for granular herbicide and insecticide applications as well as small grain seeding. Furthermore, it can be used in many different cropping situations since there is a granular herbicide program for most crops. Two such granular programs are used on the Hess farm - in corn and tomatoes.

The majority of the 225 acre farmland is planted in corn, much of which is double cropped with small grains, to be used as feed in their steer finishing operation. Due to the present high cost of cattle feed, the brothers strive for a high yield, so effective weed control is essential.

By incorporating granular herbicides, they aren't held up by weather variables as much at planting - and a timely planting is also essential if high yields are to be realized. In this regard, the brothers have streamlined many of their pre-planting operations.

"We like to fall chisel plow as much of our land as possible," Dwight explains. "We find this helps speed up planting; only the sod land is spring plowed. After plowing, all our land is disced twice, and on the second discing we are incorporating the herbicides."

A granular combination of Sutan with atrazine (18-6 G) was used for the first time this past year on the Hess farm. They used 17 pounds per acre, incorporated two inches deep - half the depth the disc to insure uniformity of incorporation and to finish the seed bed prior to planting.

Field preparation was similar for tomatoes. For weed control 40 pounds of Tillam 10-G was applied per acre pre-transplant and incorporated. "The Gandy showed its versatility in tomatoes," Dwight reports. "We also made an overlay treatment of granular Amiben, with the applicator mounted on the cultivator."

"We view this first year of using granulars as a learning experience," concludes Dwight, "we now know many of the dos and don'ts - like don't let the applicator get damp inside."

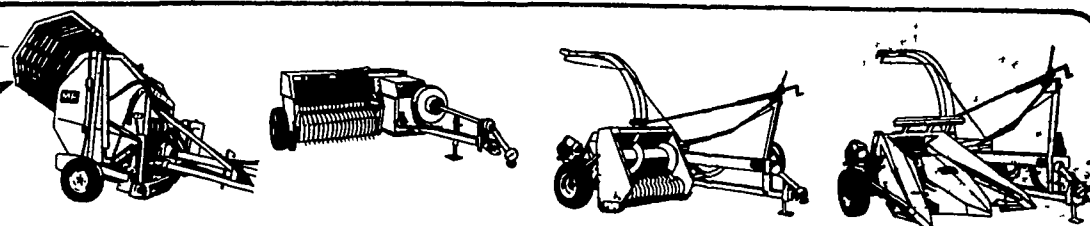


Dwight Hess of Marietta double crops corn with small grains to be used as feed in their steer finishing operation.

In the final analysis we are pleased with the granular program, we feel it's the way to go."

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