

Fertilizer impregnation now permits weed and feed

READING — Pennsylvania fertilizer blenders turned custom applicators have found a new way to increase sales, better utilize equipment and, most importantly, improve satisfaction among their farmer customers.

Thanks to a process called dry bulk fertilizer impregnation, blender/applicators in the Reading-Lancaster area have expanded their services during the busy spring planting period while offering greater flexibility to the small farmer. Until last year, the small acreage farmer in this largely dairy area had to apply preplant incorporated (ppi) herbicides on his own. But now the fertilizer blender can save him a trip across the field, not to mention valuable time, by custom applying dry fertilizer and liquid herbicides at the same time.

A weed-and-feed method, fertilizer impregnation involves spraying liquid herbicides into the fertilizer mixer while dry fertilizer is being custom blended. Each fertilizer granule absorbs the herbicide, thus becoming "impregnated" with it. The herbicide is later released when the fertilizer is dissolving in the grower's soil.

By using this method, the Reading, Pa. Bone Fertilizer Company, can make use of its six dry spreader trucks during a time when the trucks usually sit idle. The company's busy schedule keeps its application equipment running at full capacity throughout most of the year, but the dry truck liming operation usually slows to a halt right before planting season.

"We use five hi-flotation sprayer trucks and three smaller trucks to apply fluid fertilizer with liquid herbicides," says Bill Angstadt, general manager of Reading Bone and the fourth generation to carry on this family business.

"But it's not practical for us to bring in our big fluid rigs to a farm with only 20 or 30 acres of corn. These

sprayers hold more than 1000 gallons and can cover 20 acres in an hour. We lose efficiency going from farm to farm with them."

Most of Reading Bone's corn customers have large enough acreages to justify bringing in the big equipment. But a good 10,000 corn acres are scattered among small farms in the company's seven-county market area.

"Those growers had no choice before except to apply their own ppi herbicide," states Angstadt. "But now that we're impregnating dry fertilizer with ppi herbicides we can offer them the total program. We use the spreader trucks to apply the impregnated fertilizer because they can do a 10 to 12 acre job much more efficiently."

To prepare the mixture, Angstadt first blends "Sutan+ 67E" herbicide with atrazine and mixes it into a slurry. He then pumps the mixture into the fertilizer blender while the fertilizer is being custom blended. For each acre, he uses 500 lbs of 20-10-10 dry fertilizer plus five pints "Sutan+" and 1 1/4 lb atrazine.

"The process doesn't take any longer than regular custom blending," says Angstadt. "Last year was really just our 'getting feet wet year' for impregnation, but I can tell it's going to be a bonus for us. The farmers were very pleased with the results."

According to Angstadt, the method not only saves the farmers a trip across the field, but they get more consistent weed control with "Sutan+" and atrazine. Weeds controlled by the herbicide mixture include annual grasses such as barnyardgrass, fall panicum and seedling johnsongrass, and annual broadleaf weeds such as ragweed, cocklebur and morningglory.

Fertilizer impregnation also offers farmers much more flexibility. Angstadt says. With big fluid rigs, the entire field has to be sprayed at once. But with spreader

trucks, a grower might have 20 acres spread one day, disc the mixture into the soil, and then have the applicator come back the next day to spread the rest of his acreage.

"As long as the grower applies 'Sutan+' within a week of planting, he has the option of applying it all at once or in several applications," explains Angstadt.

Chemgro Fertilizer Company, of East Petersburg, specializes in dry fertilizer blending and application in the five-county area it serves. The company also experimented with fertilizer impregnation last year, using "Eptam 7-E" herbicide on alfalfa ground. Sales manager Jim Bowersox feels that the process will "open new doors" for the company's custom application business.

"We don't have fluid spray trucks, so the only application service we could offer in the past was custom applying dry fertilizer with our spreader trucks," states Bowersox. "Now we can expand our services to include herbicide application, as well."

Last spring Chemgro impregnated "Eptam" on 5-15-30 dry fertilizer for four of its customers, using two quarts of the herbicide to 300 lbs fertilizer per acre. A preplant incorporated herbicide, "Eptam" controls



Reading Bone Fertilizer Co., family business started in 1905 and operated by Bill Angstadt Sr. and Bill Angstadt Jr., offers a total crop program to farmers in the Berks County area, including soil tests, insect identification and pesticide and fertilizer recommendations.

annual grasses and annual broadleaf weeds in alfalfa. "The growers were happy to let us apply the mixture, because it saves them time and energy," says Bowersox. "Before, the only way you could tank mix

herbicides and fertilizer was with liquid solutions. But now dry fertilizer can compete with liquid fertilizer on a convenience scale."

Bowersox says Chemgro plans to offer impregnation

of preplant corn herbicides such as "Sutan+" and "Eradicane" this year. "Impregnation is a great tool for a dry fertilizer company like Chemgro," Bowersox says. "It'll be great for our sales."

Good fertilizer use keeps costs down

SALISBURY, Md. — Fertilizer costs are always going up. There are lots of reasons — production, transportation and other energy-related costs, as well as the world-wide demand for fertilizers.

Farmers are understandably anxious to get the most they can out of their fertilizer dollar. Fertilizer represents 40 percent of the direct cost of producing an acre of corn. The percentage can be just as high for soybeans, though in some cases you don't need any fertilizer at all with them.

With fertilizer playing such an important role in the economics of crop production these days, it's not surprising that three of the presentations at the upcoming Delmarva Corn and Soybean Technology Conference, February 4, in Salisbury, Md., will concern this subject.

Agronomists William Mitchell of the University of Delaware and Allan Bandel of the University of Maryland will talk about efficient fertilizer use in corn production — stressing practices such as banding in the planter, sidedressing young plants with nitrogen, and the effective use of minor elements. Their talk should give farmers some good ideas on how to get the most from their corn fertility programs.

Another speaker, George Hawkins of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, will discuss soybean fertility. Hawkins has done a lot of good work with soybeans on coastal plain

soils similar to those on Delmarva.

He has also studied the use of minor elements on soybeans. According to extension agent Ed Kee, one of the conference planners, the VPI agronomist is a real believer in the value of soil tests in determining how much fertilizer to apply.

With all the wheat that was planted last fall, it looks like soybean acreage will be increasing, says Kee. So this discussion of soybean fertility should be very timely.

A lot of new lime materials have become available to Delmarva farmers over the last few years. Another

conference speaker Roy Flannery of Rutgers University, will discuss the merits of each of these materials and explain how to compare them so you know which will give you the best buy for your money.

Besides these three presentations, there will also be talks on the latest corn and soybean cultural practices, the grain outlook for the Eastern Shore, how to troubleshoot corn and soybeans.

Capping off the program will be nationally known farm broadcaster Orion Samuelson, speaking on

US Agriculture in the Eighties. Tennessee farmer Cotton Ivy will return to serve as conference MC and entertain with his amusing country tales.

The Delmarva Corn and Soybean Technology Conference is sponsored by area agribusiness industries and the Extension Services of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Exhibits open at 8:30 a.m. The program starts at 9:30 and adjourns at 3:45 p.m. See local extension agents or agribusiness representatives for free lunch tickets.

County fairs receive \$1.9 million in state funds

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Penrose Hallowell Thursday presented checks totaling \$1,944,499.95 to representatives of 107 county and community fairs from across Pennsylvania.

The 16 county fairs in Region 6, southcentral Pennsylvania, received checks totaling \$288,689.49.

The presentations, reimbursements for premiums and programs, were made during the annual meeting of the State Association of County Fairs, held at the Marriott Inn of Harrisburg.

Hallowell told the Fair Association, "It is a great pleasure for the Department of Agriculture to assist our

county and community fairs through the Pennsylvania Fair Fund.

"Your fairs are an important part of Pennsylvania's rural agricultural heritage, not only as a showplace for agriculture, but also as a proving grounds for the farmers and farm youths who compete in fair events."

Robert F. Norman, President of the Association said, "These funds are essential to the operation of our fairs. We are proud to be a part of Pennsylvania agriculture, and intend to continue our efforts toward increased competition and promotion of our farm tradition."

Hallowell said he is

looking forward to another successful fair season in Pennsylvania.

"Beginning with the Dubois Gateway Fair in Clearfield County June 15th through the close of the Uniontown Poultry and Farm Show in Fayette County November 29th, millions of Pennsylvanians will have the opportunity to meet Pennsylvania agriculture on a face to face basis. We are proud of our fairs and wish them continued success."

The Pennsylvania Fair Fund annually disburses monies from horse and harness racing revenues to 107 fairs in the Commonwealth.



Jim Bowersox, sales manager of Chemgro Fertilizer, of East Petersburg, says he feels that fertilizer impregnation is opening new doors for the custom application business.