

# Impregnation streamlines fertilizer-herbicide application

LACEYVILLE — For dealers facing hectic application schedules in the spring, it makes sense to combine as many trips across customer's fields as possible. Impregnation allows them to do just that.

This weed-and-feed technique combines two trips across the field into one and allows farmers to get into their fields earlier to plant. It's one process that benefits both dealers and farmers.

Impregnation involves the spraying of liquid herbicides onto dry bulk fertilizer in a fertilizer blender. The mixture needs to be blended for several minutes so that the fertilizer granules can be evenly coated with herbicide. After the herbicide and fertilizer are blended, the mixture can be augered directly into a spreader truck, then taken to the field.

For dealers who handle large amounts of herbicide and fertilizers, anything that can lead to convenience is a big plus. Wes Spencer, Agway store manager in Laceyville, Pa., first tried impregnation six years ago for that reason.

Spencer says that by using impregnation with some of his customers, he is taking stress off the work load generated by other customers who prefer having liquid herbicides applied alone.

"Before we started impregnation, we always feel behind on our spray schedule," he points out. "Now, we are using both sprayers and fertilizer spreaders to get the herbicide down, and we feel a lot less pressured to get things done in the small amount of time we have in the spring."

Spencer sees other advantages to impregnation. It offers weed control comparable to that of liquid fertilizer and herbicide mixtures, but costs up to 20 percent less. And farmers who have

Spencer impregnate for them do not have to worry about handling fertilizers or herbicides themselves. They also don't need application equipment when it is custom-applied.

"Impregnation is easy, there are no complications with the process, and it beats having to take water tanks out into the field," Spencer says. "Also, application can be made under almost any condition, including windy weather."

When Spencer started impregnation, the only thing he needed to buy was an impregnator, which cost \$250. He already had a 5-ton blender for fertilizer mixing. Spencer first tried impregnation on 100 acres. Last year, over 1000 acres were treated with impregnated fertilizer. Out of those acres, 75 to 80 percent were custom-applied.

The herbicides Spencer uses for impregnation include Sutan+, Eradicane Extra, Lasso, Dual and Aatrex for corn and Eptam for alfalfa. Ninety percent of the acres treated with impregnated mixtures last year were in corn, with the rest in alfalfa.

Spencer points out that he makes the recommendation to his customers on herbicide rates. "We usually use Sutan+ at a 2½ quart rate and Aatrex at a 1½ pound rate. If we went with anything lower, we would be sacrificing weed control," he says.

Spencer likes the fertilizer mixture to be spread at a minimum rate of 300 pounds per acre. "If we go with anything lower than that, the mixture will be too wet," he notes. "We look at the needs of the individual farmer, and if one field needs more fertilizer,

then we go with a higher rate."

For those farmers who like to apply their own fertilizer/herbicide mixture, Spencer rents out trailer spreaders. An advantage to letting a dealer apply the mixture, though, is that it can cut a farmer's equipment costs. And with custom application, the farmer can rely on the dealer to get the job done right.

Gene Gerould, Agway salesman in Bradford County also sees a trend towards impregnation. Acres treated at the Agway Towanda dealership have jumped from 500 to 1000 acres in the three years that impregnation has been offered.

Gerould sees the same weed problems in his area that are in Spencer's. He claims his customers had good weed control results last year with impregnation.

"I can say that there really is no difference in weed control with impregnation as opposed to applying liquid herbicides," he says. "As a matter of fact, impregnation allows farmers to apply their herbicide and fertilizer under almost every situation."

Minimum and no-till farmers are finding impregnated fertilizers work well on residue-covered fields. With impregnation, fertilizer granules aren't as tied up by debris to the extent that liquids are because granules tend to sift through surface trash.

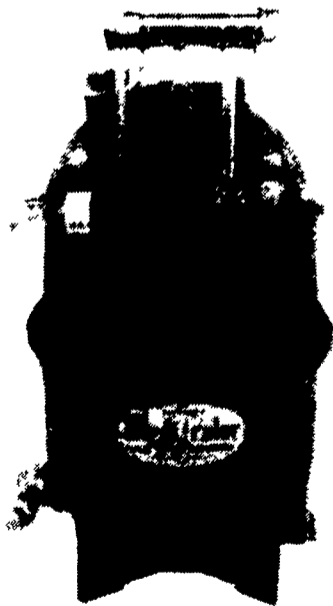
"By applying an average of 300 pounds of fertilizer an acre, we can cover at least 60 acres in one fill," Gerould says. "If we had to spray, we would continually be stopping to fill up the spray and water tanks."



Wes Spencer, Agway store manager in Laceyville, stands by his impregnation equipment after a busy spring season. Spencer keeps his blender and impregnator outside, so spreader trucks can be backed up to the blender and handling of the fertilizer is kept to a minimum.

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