

# Impregnation: farmers save time, dealers keep up

EASTON — When Ed Dufault schedules his springtime custom herbicide applications, he no longer has to worry about keeping his customers happy.

By using dry weed-and-feed, the Agway plant manager can stay on top of his custom fertilizer blending business and still give his customers a quality fertilizer and herbicide application.

Dufault, who works at the Johnsonville plant, has been offering impregnation for the past four years and reports that it has not only helped to boost sales of both fertilizers and herbicides, but has also attracted new customers to the dealership.

And farmers like Willard Setzer

of Easton find the time they save is well worth the cost of the service.

Because most of the dealership's herbicide business is custom-applied, Agway's spray schedule had been very busy. But with impregnation, some of the business has been transferred from spray trucks to a spreader truck.

"Impregnation has helped us to spread our work out," Dufault says. "Our weed-and-feed business has been on the increase since we started it. In 1985, we applied impregnated fertilizer on 2,000 acres."

The actual process of impregnation may take Dufault longer to carry out than filling a spray truck, but it combines fer-

tilizer and herbicide applications. And that can reduce the work hours for the dealership in the long run because it means only one custom trip across the field for the customer.

Roy Aber, salesman for Agway, says his customers value the convenience of the combined trip as well as the economics.

"Farmers say convenience is as much a necessity as it is a luxury," Aber stresses. "When they can get their preplant operations done in a faster time period, then planting earlier can easily become a reality."

Aber points out farmers would rather share the application responsibilities than do everything themselves. "We put in our one trip and the farmer puts in his trip and when it's done, the farmer can go ahead and plant," he says.

The impregnation process takes relatively little time. Dufault measures the dry fertilizer and puts it into the five-ton mixer while he measures the herbicides into the impregnator. The herbicide is then metered into the mixer and is blended for several minutes.

Until last year, Dufault had to pour the herbicides from five-gallon containers. In 1985, he bought herbicides from Stauffer Chemical Company in 175-gallon mini-bulk tanks to use for his impregnation set-up. Now all he has to do is pump the herbicide from the tanks into the impregnator.

"We no longer have to spend the time opening and pouring the containers," Dufault notes. "And best of all, we don't have to worry about rinsing and disposing them."

The herbicides Dufault uses in his impregnation business include Eradicane Extra™, Sutan™,

atrazine and Bladex™ for corn, Eptam™ for alfalfa and Treflan™ and Sencor™ for soybeans.

"We only use preplant incorporated herbicides because they require mixing with the soil," Dufault says. "When you use granular fertilizers, it's best to get them down a few inches in the soil."

Dufault chooses the herbicide rates 99 percent of the time. If weed problems are severe and soils are heavy, he will go toward the higher label recommendation. As far as the rate of fertilizer, Dufault likes to put down a minimum of 300 pounds an acre but will spread as much as 900 pounds if fertilizer needs are great.

Dufault has one spreader truck for custom application but farmers who like to apply the mixture themselves can rent out buggies. The spreader truck, which puts out the mixture in a 40-foot swath, is designed to provide a uniform fertilizer distribution pattern. Weed-and-feed applications require greater precision for maximum weed control so accurate application is necessary.

"We really like to do the work ourselves because then we know it is being spread properly," he says. "Our driver has been doing this for 15 years and does an excellent job."

One of Dufault's customers, Willard Setzer, of Easton, doesn't mind sharing some of his preplant operations with the dealership. By splitting the duties with Dufault, Setzer has cut out one trip across the field, which allows him to spend more time with other farming duties.

Setzer grows 1,000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and alfalfa, in addition to running a 60-head dairy operation. For four years, he has used impregnation on his corn acreage.

"Weed-and-feed was a natural for my production program. I was already applying my fertilizer in a separate trip, but by combining it



By splitting preplant operations with his dealer, Willard Setzer, of Easton, Pa., can speed up springtime duties and can increase chances of getting the crop planted on time.

with the herbicide application, I essentially am getting a free trip across the field," Setzer says.

Setzer has used Eradicane Extra for the past eight years on Johnsongrass-infested acres. When he switched to impregnation, he included the herbicide in his weed control program. Dufault now sprays one gallon of Eradicane Extra and two quarts of Bladex on 700 pounds of 25-16-13 fertilizer and gets a complete weed-and-feed mix.

Setzer obtains good results with this herbicide combination, but also cultivates his fields prior to the application to aid in controlling Johnsongrass. Corn stalks are disced once in the fall and twice in the spring. After the impregnation application is made, Setzer goes over the fields with a 20-foot disc to incorporate the mixture two to three inches in the soil.



Ed Dufault of Agways says impregnation can be done easily and quickly. His impregnator and 175-gallon herbicide bulk tank are located near each other, so there's no need to move and pour containers.

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