

CLAs In Forages:

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He said that work has begun on testing Roundup herbicide-resistant alfalfa. Originally Monsanto, the company that manufactures the trademarked Roundup herbicide, scheduled a release date of 2005 or 2006, but the latest news has a release date as early as 2002.

One of the frustrations that researchers and ultimately growers will face is how many "bugs" are worked out of the mixes to ensure they work effectively. Also, companies, to protect intellectual property rights, are withholding release of germplasm to universities — to the detriment of growers — and



Speakers at the recent Chester County Crops Day in Guthriesville included, from left, Tim Smail, NRCS; David Wagner, Penn State precision ag specialist; and Marvin Hall, Penn State forage specialist.

bringing products to the market perhaps too fast, according to Hall, before research can help solve some potential problems.

In the future, growers could be using yield monitors on forage harvesters similar to those on combines for grain crops. "It's easier to do for grain than forage," he said. But in five or six years, producers could be seeing yield monitors on the baler or chopper.

When spraying, according to a precision application specialist, it's important to ensure against accidental drift. To do so, keep the pressure in the lines down so the drops are larger and keep more volume of the liquid in larger drops to stem field drift away from plants, noted David Wagner, Penn State extension specialist for precision application and precision ag.

Keep each drop greater than 200 microns, he said (100 microns is about the width of a human hair), to ensure against problems of drift. Also, it's vital to calibrate sprayers, don't spray if the wind speed is greater than 5 miles per hour, spray on a hot, dry day, and fix the nozzles. Bad nozzles can cost a lot of money in excess application, Wagner

noted. Wagner reviewed various flat fan and air injection types of nozzles at the meeting.

It's important to use clean water through a mesh screen to prevent nozzle clogging. If the nozzles become clogged, don't use a knife or a drill bit. Instead, use a simple toothbrush to remove the debris.

For nozzles, Europeans use ceramics. They can be more costly than brass or stainless steel. But a good alternative is the stainless steel, which will give a few years of use.

"It's too costly to not know how much spray is on the field," Wagner said. Sprayers should be calibrated correctly. "It's too costly to not have new nozzles and not calibrate the sprayer."

For control of geese, a federally protected species, there are few options that work quite as

effectively as dogs, noted Tim Smail, Natural Resource Conservation Service conservationist.

Smail, who spoke at the crops day, said that dogs can work to keep geese in control and out of producers' hairs and crop pocketbook. Whatever is used has to be part of an integrated program, Smail noted.

Though producers have used various methods — including owl eyes, propane cannons, and other methods of control, which give some control over a limited time — dogs provide long-term control.

The key is to make conditions at the farm "inhospitable enough to allow (geese) to not reproduce . . . and convince them to fly farther ahead with the rest of the geese."

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