

Keep sprayer moving in field

It may seem like an elementary idea, but making sure spraying equipment is ready and fully prepared before going to the field is the key to keeping your sprayer reliable and operating efficiently this season. Paul Haefner, Agco Application Equipment Division specialist, offers the following suggestions to help optimize your efficiency and keep your sprayer running at full steam in the field.

■ **Fix it before you go.** Worn or leaky hoses, loose fittings, and plugged nozzles are typical small issues that cause untimely delays. Repair and replace these “little” things to save big time in the field.

■ **Calibrate sprayers properly.** Under-application can rob you of valuable time spent to reapply to achieve good weed control. Over-application will take dollars from your pocket through wasted chemical and possible crop damage or carry-over issues.

Taking time to calibrate the sprayer the night before or while filling provides time for attention to detail before the “itch” to get in the field takes over.

■ **Outfit your sprayer with the right spray tips for the job.** Be sure to understand the chemical you are using, the droplet size, surface coverage and proper application rate. Then choose a spray tip that will achieve the optimal rate at the groundspeed you plan to travel. The crop protection product label often will include a recommendation. As a general rule, choose the following droplet type for best performance: fine for fungicides and insecticides, medium for herbicides, and coarse for preemergent products. Weather conditions, particularly wind and any effects it may have on drift control, should also be considered. If there is no recommendation for nozzles or spray quality, consider the target, the product and the risk of drift when choosing nozzles.

■ **Tender in the field.** Tendering in the field saves drive time to and from a water source. When choosing a tendering system, make sure the tender tank allows you to fill the sprayer several times before refilling. For example, for a 750-gallon sprayer, a tender tank of 2,500 gallons would allow you to fill the sprayer three times. Being able to transport the sprayer and the tendering equipment at the same time makes it a one-person operation, further improving efficiency.

A chemical induction system, which mixes the chemical and water during the filling process, is another time-saver, especially compared to top-filling the chemicals. It also reduces the operator's exposure to chemicals.

■ **Embrace technology.** Adding a GPS guidance system, either a lightbar or assisted-steering technology, allows the operator to cover the field more efficiently. Guidance technology helps avoid overlap and reduces skips, saving chemical and cutting the extra time to go back over missed areas. Adding automatic boom section control is especially helpful for eliminating oversprays in headlands and point rows. These technologies also take away the guesswork associated with foam markers.

Key Points

- Prepare your spraying equipment beforehand, to keep it moving in the field.
- Be sure to calibrate the sprayer properly and use the correct spray tips.
- Understand the chemical, droplet size, surface coverage and application rate.

■ **Direct injection systems.** Time spent filling, mixing chemical and completing a full-system washout can be reduced by fitting a conventional crop sprayer with a direct injection system. Comprised of one to four pumps, the system dispenses the chemical directly into the water stream on the pressure side of the pump at a known rate.

The main sprayer tank holds only clean water. The chemical is mixed with the water, either in a manifold or at the main water pump, and the resulting mix flows to the booms and nozzles.

To learn more about how to maximize the efficiency of your sprayer, visit www.agchem.com.

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