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COMMAND FREE & CLEAR

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Command finally received its official "Section 3" registration for rice. This frees us from the propanil-resistant barnyardgrass restriction so we can use Command for its true strength: cheap, convenient grass control.

How exactly should you use Command? That is still being kicked around at coffee shops. Command details will vary from field to field and from year to year. Command's grass control is good, but not perfect. At flood up you can have no grass, a few grasses or, if Mother nature was unkind, a complete grown up mess. (For the sake of fairness, that can be said about EVERY rice herbicide).

If everything goes right, you can apply a cheap broadleaf herbicide at flood up. Command will release any nutsege you have so Permit or Londax probably need to be part of the equation. However, it is best to plan on having some escaped grass. There are several good grass clean up choices. Stam or Arrosolo plus Permit or Londax have been popular for clean up. Word from Arkansas is that Duet was popular since it is an economical combination of propanil and Londax. I recently visited with a farmer who felt that Command followed by Ordram was a meant-to-be marriage. My personal favorite is the experimental herbicide Regiment which controls escaped grasses and broadleaf weeds. The bottom line is choice and flexibility.

Your scouting does need to be turned up a notch especially with regard to WHICH weeds are present. Scouting has always been important with rice, but with Stam-type programs, it was more about HOW BIG the stuff is, as opposed to EXACTLY WHAT it is. Good scouting can mean the difference between a \$5.00 clean up, a \$15.00 clean up or the worst case- a control failure.

Finally we need to revisit white rice and rates. The whiteness of your rice will depend on your soil AND rainfall patterns. On a heavy gumbo, white rice is like a needle in a haystack. On lighter soils it runs the full range- some years, rice is completely green, some years it's bright white. Everyone keeps looking for a yield loss- and no one has found one from label-rate applications. We have found yield losses from double-rate applications so that means you need to exercise some common sense regarding overlapping and dressing up the ends. The Arkansas folks keep talking about going below FMC's suggested rates. But last time I visited Stuttgart, I was reminded that their ice-cream silt loam soils are a bit lighter than ours. If your soil is light, you might want to shave the rate- but be careful not to shave it too much or grass control will suffer. And remember that things change from year to year. You could probably spend years chasing rates around.

Command has reached the "see for yourself" stage. Every farm is different and there are many Command-based programs one can use. Keep an open mind, scout your fields and be ready to adjust your clean up program accordingly.