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ROUNDUP IMITATORS TESTED

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Roundup is now off patent and everyone is offering their own version. In fact, the new politically correct name is "glyphosate" which is the active ingredient in Roundup. We tested 11 different versions of glyphosate last year and saw no differences. Increased competition is always good for the customer and the price of Roundup-based products will probably continue to creep down. The bad news is that can 'em and confuse 'em name games are on the rise.

A lot of confusion centers around Zeneca's (now Syngenta's) Touchdown. The old Touchdown 5 had 5 pounds of active ingredient per gallon, was dark colored, smelled like molasses, and tended to cause leaf burn on Roundup Ready Soybeans. It could also cause severe damage to Roundup cotton and corn. The new Touchdown IQ has 4 pounds of active ingredient per gallon, is gold colored, smells like Roundup and causes no injury to Roundup Ready crops. Roundup, Touchdown 5 and Touchdown IQ are different salts of glyphosate just as amine and ester are two versions of 2,4-D. The active ingredients are the same, but there can be minor differences in how the herbicides behave. The Touchdown 5 did cause some burn, but so far Touchdown IQ appears nearly identical to Roundup.

Confusion is also high among all of Monsanto's versions of Roundup. Roundup Ultra Max (5 pounds ai/gallon) is supposed to largely replace Roundup Ultra Period (4 pounds ai/gallon). Monsanto also sells versions such as Roundup Original, Roundup Dry, and Roundup D-Pak- and the list goes on. The labeling and surfactant requirements differ on these products. There are some general rules, but it is essential to check the label for exact rates, surfactants and use patterns. The "Ultra" versions are labeled on all Roundup Ready crops. However, the Roundup Ready crops on other versions tend to be only soybeans. Non-Ultra Roundups usually require some surfactant and Monsanto is concerned that adds a risk of crop injury to Corn and Cotton. So again, double check everything.

Generics is the final confusing area as everyone seems to have their own version of glyphosate. We rarely receive labels, or information sheets on these generic products and can only tell folks to read the label. We tested three of the "generics" last year and couldn't tell any of them apart.

For practical purposes, a lot of the sales battles will be fought at the dealer level. If you want to use a particular brand, you might have to do some extra leg work to get it. Product service is being offered as a reason to use particular brands and that is something you should also consider. However, the best way to choose may be to first determine who gave you the neatest cap.