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GIVE ME A PALMER AMARANTH CONTROL PROGRAM

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Our most common request: "I need a control program for Palmer amaranth in soybeans and cotton". Our answer: Products x, y and z are better and products a, b, and c are worse, but we don't have a single cure. After we give growers the "better list" they usually say "yea we already tried those and they didn't work."

Palmer amaranth control in soybeans is easier- Go with Roundup Ready, and spray it twice. Pitfalls include drought conditions and new germination. If new Palmer has germinated and is coming on, by all means spray it the third time. Conventional soybeans need a Blazer-Cobra-Reflex type herbicide sprayed VERY timely. We might give an edge to Reflex and Flexstar because they have a bit more residual activity. Yellow herbicides, Lasso, Dual or Frontier are also good, but won't provide season-long weed control.

Cotton is the tough one. Palmer started was popping up 8 years ago and has steadily worsened. Our answer is poor- spray everything including the kitchen sink, and hope for good luck. The key phrase is "Programs control Palmer; individual herbicides do not". We successfully control Palmer with a number of programs every year. Some years it is an old-fashioned program: A yellow PPI, Cotoran pre, Cotran + MSMA directed under 3 to 5" cotton and then a hotter herbicide + MSMA directed under 6 to 9" cotton. Timing and height differentials are critical, for this program to work.

Yellow herbicides are part of the equation. Treflan or Prowl incorporated is better than surface-applied Prowl. Also, incorporating the products just before planting is better than a month before planting. Dual Magnum has been used by some producers. It is another good choice, but we haven't found it to be better than the yellows. Zorial remains as another good pigweed control option. It is rather pricey, but if you need control, you need control.

Syngenta recently stopped selling Cotoran and started selling Caparol. Caparol is slightly better on pigweed species, but again, it can't do the job by itself. You might consider Staple and Staple plus however, we have too many reports of Palmer which appears to have resistance to Staple-type products.

Roundup cotton is an important Palmer management tool, but has its weaknesses too. Palmer amaranth can grow 10" per week. If things get too wet after the 4-leaf stage- Palmer can create the wrong kind of height differential. Sometimes our Roundup-only plots turn into Palmer amaranth plots for this reason. We favor the use of preemergence herbicides, as they help maintain weed control after the over-the-top Roundup applications and before directed applications. With Roundup or conventional cotton a wick bar can help if things get away. Just be sure to keep the Roundup off both types of cotton.

Any post directed spray is good, but we give an edge to the Cobra and Goal type products. With Cobra, you might include something for extra residual.

All of these suggestions hinge on reasonable weather and proper timing. My counterpart, Ford Baldwin said that in 1970, the three most important things in weed control were timing, timing and timing, and in 2001, that hasn't changed. Palmer is tough. Design an intensive program, spray things on time and you might get lucky.