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BLADEx REPLACEMENTS ARE OK

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Unfortunately, the dawn of the Millennium is also the dawn of Bladex-free weed control. This was a popular topic at the weed sessions at the Beltwide Cotton Conference last January. Several replacements exist and more are on the way. However the key word here is "replacement", not "improvement." We've been testing the replacements and they are usually weaker, less flexible or more expensive. In this article, we are going to highlight the shortcomings, not to stop you from using them, but to dispel the image that they are big improvements.

An experimental herbicide named "Valor" has generated much interest. We have limited experience with Valor. It has good contact activity on broadleaf weeds. Pigweed is a strength, but we've seen it miss a few morningglories. Valor's residual activity is similar to Bladex's: not too long but not too short. However, Valor is among the hottest post directed materials and it's minimum application height will be around 12-inch cotton. Bladex could be sprayed (carefully) underneath 6" cotton. Mainlining a cotton-weed height differential until cotton is 6" tall is a pretty good achievement. Keeping that differential until 12" will require well-timed, applications of other herbicides and a little luck. Valor looks like a good layby material, but it won't have Bladex's flexibility. At this time Valor is not registered for post-directed use in cotton.

Direx (a new name for Karmex), Linex (a new name for Lorox), and Caparol have been offered as other possibilities. These herbicides have similar prices and residual activity to those of Bladex. However, the weed control is generally weaker. If Direx, Linex and Caparol were as good as Bladex, they would have replaced it 20 years ago. These herbicides probably have the most similarity to Bladex, but some growers will notice that they're giving up a little bit of weed control.

Harvade has recently become available as a post-directed material and Aim is also being considered. The main issue with these herbicides is that they have very little residual activity. They may be helpful to bolster weaknesses of other herbicides, but they aren't stand-alone Bladex replacements.

We have seen good results with Goal (which is currently labeled) and Reflex (which is not labeled); however, both of these herbicides cost more than Bladex. Cotoran is another choice. However, it's contact activity is less than that of Bladex and it's residual period may be a bit too long.

Bladex probably was the best of all of the directed materials. Fortunately, Bladex alternatives are plentiful and adequate. Try several and pick your favorite. But be prepared for things to be not quite as good as they used to be.