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SPRAY ADDITIVES OVER RATED

Andy Kendig and Anthony Ohmes

Weed Specialists

Comercial Agriculture Program

MU Delta Center

Although there are many good spray additives to choose from, most provide very similar results and unfortunately some are over sold as miracle products. Many herbicides require a surfactant or crop oil and additives from reputable dealers usually do the trick. However, miracle claims such as "use our additive and cut your herbicide in half" are usually too good to be true.

On the other hand, it is hard for us to out and out trash the snake oil products, we've never seen one hurt a herbicides performance. A lot of the testimonials are partially true- if conditions are right- half rates of herbicide's will work as well as the labeled rate- whether the additive is there or not. Other times herbicides can kill weeds larger that they're supposed to. Since we can't say bad things about the additives, you might consider silence to be our report that particular products are not miracles.

In most cases we don't get to test these products. We are often the manufacturer's worst enemy since our job it to test it in a totally fair situation. For that reason, the manufacturer's tend to steer clear of University testing programs and rely solely on testimonials and photographs which may not tell the whole story. In fact, the main way we learn about these products is via the grapevine.

The most common reputable additives include non ionic surfactants, crop oils, methylated seed oils and silicone surfactants. The methylated oils and silicone surfactants tend to be slightly better than crop oils which tend to be slightly better than straight surfactants. Slightly is the key word. It is also important to remember that you must follow the herbicide label- sometimes crop oils are restricted because they will make the herbicide too active and injurious to the crop.

The fertilizers UAN and Ammonium sulfate are also commonly suggested. Fertilizer additives are commonly used North of here and rarely used South of here. We have done a fair amount of testing with and without Ammonium sulfate. We could see a benefit from ammonium sulfate when we sprayed ryegrass with half-rate of Roundup. but when we used the proper Roundup rate, there was no benefit. Ammonium sulfate is a requirement in areas that have lots of calcium in the water, but that isn't much of a problem in Southeast Missouri.

We have not done formal, side-by side comparisons of herbicides with and without UAN, but we have sprayed things both ways and have never noticed any difference. The argument for fertilizer additives is that they are inexpensive. The argument against fertilizer additives is that they rust equipment. The bottom line is to follow the herbicide label and use additives from reputable dealers. There are some minor differences in the additives, but it's not worth splitting hairs. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.