

Cotton, March 20, 2002

WHY IS THERE A PALMER PIGWEED EVERY 200 FEET?

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Year after year, our cotton research shows weed control benefits from broadleaf preemergence herbicides in Roundup Ready Programs. However, most growers don't use broadleaf preemergence herbicides. A few use yellow herbicides, because, they are inexpensive; but the grass and pigweed control basically overlap Roundup's strengths.

Why do we see benefits, but growers don't use the products? We see benefits because our test plot areas have high weed pressure- ALL herbicides work great if there aren't any weeds. Why don't growers use them? The herbicides can cause some temporary crop injury and they do cost money.

But, is it possible that preemergence herbicides benefit weed control in cleaner, well-managed farmer fields? In the last three years, many fields have a weed- often it's Palmer amaranth- every 200 feet or so. We can't prove it, but are we seeing these weeds because we've stopped using preemergence herbicides?

The story has always been that if you spray things on time, you do not need preemergence herbicides in an Roundup Ready program. However, I don't know of anyone who has the luxury of WAITING for the right time. Take the typical acreage that everyone is farming these days and throw in a big rainstorm, and can quickly be behind the eight ball. Wet weather significantly delays our spray timings, roughly every four years. The place we see the benefit is the time between the final, over-the-top Roundup application and the first directed application. This is the most critical time and is the best time for a rain to mess things up.

We touched earlier on yellow herbicides versus "broadleaf herbicides". There is no question that Prowl and Treflan provide good control of some key weeds for a great price. But it's broadleaf herbicides that give us the benefit. Grasses and small-seeded broadleaf weeds are strengths of both yellow herbicides and Roundup. Our best results have always come from the Cotoran-based products, although it's hard to fault the other mainstream broadleaf preemergence herbicides including Caparol and Direx. Command, Zorial and Staple also have places for control of specific weeds.

On the subject of crop injury, we occasionally see some yellowing and stunting, but it it always short lived. Four weeks after emergence, we cannot tell plots that had a broadleaf preemergence herbicide from those that don't. One final disclaimer: the biggest drawback to preemergence herbicides is that sometimes you don't get an activating rain. We had a lot of that last year.

Would there be a benefit for you? One suggestion is to use a pre on outlying fields but not on close ones. My answer has always been that neither the chemical companies nor the University fo Missouri know what your workload is. You are the one that knows if a preemergence

herbicide is right for you. On average- we see benefits. Could it be the cure for that occasional big weed? Try some fields and see which ones need to be chopped.