

All Crops, April 11, 202

## **DRIFT REMINDER**

Andy Kendig

Extension Weed Specialist

Commercial Agriculture Program

MU Delta Center

It's time to take a moment and think about drift. Drift incidents have increased in recent years. Glyphosate is often mentioned as the culprit. But two disclaimers- 1) missapplication is the culprit, not glyphosate and 2) Although glyphosate is tough on corn and rice, it has a lot of company as every other herbicide gets drifted on occasion- we just don't use those other herbicides as widespread as we do glyphosate.

We will talk about drift reducing techniques later; however, the majority of drift cases come from applications that clearly shouldn't have been made. Farming pressures are a key factor. Weeds are getting big and winds are blowing in advance of a storm front that threatens to dump two inches of rain and further delay things. The University weed guy said, "Don't let them get any bigger."

The best drift control is discipline. Shut things down when it's too windy. Train your sprayer operators to recognize sensitive crops and to recognize when wind gets too high. If there's a storm front coming- think about hiring an airplane after the front goes through. You'll probably get better weed control since the moisture will be good. Another word about discipline- Missouri has some of the best ag pilots around. I have worked very few incidents from aerial application. Theoretically an airplane has the highest drift potential- but when you know that things could be bad- you are that much more careful.

Drift control technology is simple- there are several good drift-reducing nozzles to choose from. In the case of contact herbicides where the label may specify high water volumes and high pressure- you can get around a lot of that by targeting small, actively growing weeds and by biting the bullet and spraying a little more water. Most research has shown that low-drift tips, operated properly, do not diminish the effectiveness of contact herbicides. Also, be sure to run your boom as low as you reasonably can. That is usually a good bit lower than you might think. A boom can theoretically be run 15" or less above the target. Fifteen inches is impossible in the real world due to the boom rocking; but five feet above the target is too much. Regular tips, high pressure, and blowing fog five feet above the crop in a 20 mile per hour wind towards a sensitive crop and damage will occur. Good tips, a low boom height, reasonable wind and a little common sense solves 99% of the problems.

Most folks, including the Missouri Department of Agriculture realize that perfectly zero drift, is impossible. Even if you follow directions, watch the weather, hold off next to a sensitive crops, sooner or later, an honest mistake will happen. If you do make an honest mistake, confess, consult your insurance and shoot straight with your neighbor. Our Department of Agriculture inspectors are good people, but when there are two mad parties, the best they can do is to have one person mad at them. More often they have the privilege of having two folks mad at them since the truth often lies somewhere in the middle.

There is one more thing to watch carefully: while most of our drift cases are due to high winds, the worst cases of drift come from spraying in zero wind and a temperature inversion. Light winds actually break up and disperse any small particles; while in a dead calm, the smaller spray particles can slowly spread over the next field and put hurt sensitive crops.

The bottom line is discipline. If you aren't using drift reducing tips and a low boom height, you need to start now. But the big issue is to park the sprayer if the wind is too high or dead calm.