

All Crops, April 18, 2003  
**TAX DAY 2003 (DRIFT)**  
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April 15 was tax day- but it also had a screaming, Southwest wind. It looked like the whole country was blowing away. This article should probably be about no-till, it's economics and how the cover of winter vegetation is an excellent way to stop the soil from blowing. But, instead, this article is about herbicide drift. The number of drift complaints have been sharply higher the last two years. Many of these cases are glyphosate drifting onto corn, but there are just as many cases of other products drifting onto other crops.

Drift control technology is straight forward and great. It includes 1) Low-drift tips (there are many kinds to choose from and they all work great; 2) Proper spray pressures (usually a lower pressure, although some low drift tips require higher pressures). Keeping spray booms low (most booms only need to be 18" above the target- as long as the boom doesn't sway excessively) and 4) a drift control agent from a reputable source. If you are using the new Roundup Weathermax, be sure to use the correct drift control agent.

In 95% of the cases you should be using these technologies. There are still too many sprayers blowing fog six feet above the crop. Additionally, unless the herbicide label specifically restricts it, many contact herbicides aren't adversely affected by the larger droplets. Again, the label is the law- some products where coverage is critical, do not allow certain low-drift setups.

But, remember the bottom line: Drift control technology is meaningless when there's a 20 mph wind blowing towards a sensitive crop. The majority of drift cases we see involve a significant wind (or zero wind). The solution to the majority of our drift problems is the simple discipline to shut down when it's too windy or dead calm. With dead calm conditions, spray particles can slowly float from one field to another- and cause equally severe damage.

Being philosophical- the real cause of drift is desperation. In 2002 when it was wet and cotton planting was delayed, the time savings with stale seedbeds was appealing. Being overly simple- you spray a burndown and start planting. Unfortunately we drifted a lot of glyphosate from these cotton fields onto our increased corn acreage. Remember- corn is very sensitive to glyphosate, cotton is very sensitive to 2,4-D and soybeans are very sensitive to Banvel/Clarity/Distinct products.

Our aerial applicators deserve a plug. They do nothing but spray, and probably have the toughest circumstances. But, they cause very few of our drift incidents. If it is too windy and there's a big rainstorm coming (the two always go together). Go ahead and wait it out, and call the airplane after the rain comes and the winds die down. It will cost a little bit more, but it will also save a lot of headaches. But, talk to them ahead of time- they might not want to fly glyphosate if your field is surrounded by corn or rice. If aerial application is not an option, some careful planning will usually give you a solution.

You should configure your sprayer with low drift tips. But, even if you are behind the eight-ball and need to spray (weed guys are always preaching how you must spray on time), bite the bullet and shut things down if it's too breezy. Drift control basically comes down to discipline.