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NEW OR NOT?

Andy Kendig

Extension Weed Specialist

Commercial Agriculture Program

MU Delta Center

Dow Agrosiences promoted a new weed control program this past summer. It was an extra-early application of Clincher plus Command targeted at spiking to 1-leaf rice. It was loosely associated with the new aerial Command label. It was also related to the fact that during pre-flood, Clincher worked better on smaller grass. This concept was targeted to the grower who didn't get his Command put out at planting, and some grasses had emerged.

We tried several of these programs at the Delta Center and they were among our best treatments in 2003. Next year, some other program might be the magic bullet, but we did find these programs to work well.

Should you switch to this program in 2004? Is there something magical here? We won't recommend one good weed control program over another. And, there are several good rice weed control programs to choose from. If you struggle to spray Command as a true at-planting, PRE treatment, this is one to consider. It is also an option to keep in your back pocket if the rain hits at just the wrong time.

To avoid getting in trouble with other chemical companies, we should point out that this is not a new philosophy or program. We used to know this treatment as Prowl or Bolero, delayed PRE, with a quart of two of propanil thrown in for the emerged grasses. We also might have known it as a timely application of Stam + Prowl or Stam + Bolero, or even more recently as a delayed preemergence application of Facet.

Regardless of the exact chemistry, there is some great wisdom in these types of programs. It's generally harmless to spray a little bit early. But, spraying a little late is one of our biggest weed problems, especially with rice. The "early" program capitalizes on fact that small, actively growing grass is easier to kill. The majority of rice chemicals struggle to control grasses bigger than the 4-leaf stage. So Dow's (and whoever else's) approach benefits by encouraging growers to get out to the field sooner.

Clincher and Command are not the only herbicides that can be used extra early. Propanil and RiceStar are also good choices. (One special note- Ricestar may be changing so be sure to check the label for crop safety to small rice). The Dow program usually involved Command as it's residual herbicide, but Prowl or Facet can also work as the mix partner. However, be careful with Bolero since it can antagonize Clincher. Some of these treatments can be applied a little later than the spike- to one-leaf-stages, but, again, earlier always works better than later.

Consider trying one of these programs next year. Maybe Dow's approach or maybe someone else's. But, also don't forget that even beyond mixing and matching herbicides in an early-POST programs, there are some other, completely different programs that also have merit. Most

growers will probably stick with Command at a truly preemergence timing and leave off the postemergence herbicide until later. The secret to a Command program is good scouting and the application of an appropriate follow up treatment.