

PLAN AGAINST POSTFLOOD TREATMENTS IN RICE

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Rice growers are making more and more postflood clean-up treatments. Most of this can be blamed on tough weather the past few years. Dow's herbicide Clincher came along at a great time and gave us a fairly powerful and economical grass clean up option. However, we need to make sure that the goal of our weed control programs is to avoid postflood clean up treatments if possible.

Command programs depend upon customized clean up applications. In a perfect world, this clean up should be accomplished during the preflood time frame. In Missouri, we have a tendency to not flush our rice unless it is absolutely necessary. In Arkansas, growers tend to flush immediately and automatically after planting to activate herbicides and get their rice up. Flushed Command usually provides outstanding grass control, and growers only have to follow up with broadleaf and/or nutsedge treatments. Some growers tell us of using only Command and Aim and having excellent, dirt-cheap weed control.

However, when Command is not flushed, the grass control depends upon when and how much it rains, and is less consistent. The odds of your grass control making it to flood up are reduced when Command isn't flushed. This is where we need to be careful. If grass control isn't complete, you risk reducing rice yields, and clean up costs are increased.

One popular follow up is propanil plus Permit or propanil plus Londax. The product Duet is also used a lot since it is a propanil-Londax premix. These treatments are useful because they not only control broadleaf and sedge weeds, they control any grasses that may have escaped Command. This type of treatment is somewhat more expensive than Aim, however, if you have grass escapes, Aim won't get the job done.

An important question we need to ask is if we are making our propanil follow up treatments at the right time. We may have the mind set that if we use Command, we can relax for a couple of weeks. However; if grasses come through Command early, the propanil follow-up needs to be made very early. This treatment may need to be made just as early as we made it in the "olden days". If Command is holding well, the follow up can be delayed until closer to flood up. Again, in a perfect world, the early follow up treatment would finish up your weed control program except for any broadleaf and aquatic issues in thin spots.

Postflood salvage has always been an issue in rice, and I don't want to imply that it is the result of bad management. Rice weed control has always been tricky and Mother Nature can derail the best preplanned weed control programs. Propanil plus Facet is an outstanding choice if you have grasses and broadleaf weeds and Clincher is a good economical choice if you only have grasses. One other important note: while we have good postflood options, you cannot expect miracles. Propanil + Facet, Clincher and Regiment all fail on occasion, and the more we

challenge them with thicker and larger grass, the more they'll tend to fail. Even salvage treatments need to be made in a timely fashion.

Weed scouting has always been important for rice. Even though we have picked up five new herbicides in the last three years, scouting is now more important. In the propanil days, you really only needed to know if weeds were present and how big they were. Now, it is much more important to know exactly which weeds are there. Especially in Missouri, Command may release broadleaves only, broadleaves and nutsedge, or grass broadleaves and nutsedge. You need to know what you have in order to choose the best follow-up treatment.

A final disclaimer- you might take some of these comments to mean that Command is a bad herbicide. It is not. Rice herbicides are not Roundup. They all fail on occasion, and do not have perfect consistency. Command has above average consistency and offers extremely economical grass control. Rice weed control has always been expensive and any herbicide which offers decent weed control at lower prices is going to be popular. However, Command has made things a bit more complicated- scouting and correct weed identification are more important than ever. On the one hand, I hope we have perfect weather in 2004 and that we don't have to make postflood salvage treatments. On the other hand, I guess all the headaches of 2003 were worth it as most crops yielded well and prices were good. Try to avoid salvage treatments; but if you need them, be glad we've got them.