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Extract of Andrew's column from "The Land"

Spray Drift – it's Avoidable

As harvest is under way are you finding spray damage cutting into your hard earned dollars? Whether it is your own or your neighbour's crops or pastures it should not happen.

With technology and the best advice available, spray drift should be totally eliminated. We have the threat of the community and more importantly, governments, quite willing to have certain chemicals removed from our use.

Our leaders need to look at spray drift as the one of the biggest single problems to happen in agriculture, and call for a complete change of attitude of farmers who are about to apply all chemicals, or we all will suffer stricter rules or worse, loss of certain chemicals.

At a recent Industry meeting in Canberra put on by the NFF and APVMA, it was decided that spray drift needed to be targeted vigorously, it had been ongoing for much to long.

There is no reason for drift to occur. We now have a better understanding of equipment selection and setup and how weather affects spraying conditions.

Have you considered how much money is wasted by not getting the spray onto the weed you are targeting. Instead you are giving money away to others who do not want your spray. Think of the money you lose due to ineffectual kill of weeds because the spray went elsewhere.

If you could use the following suggestions, spray drift would be almost a thing of the past:

- Spray under desirable weather conditions; select correct droplet size; spray with a desirable cross wind; do not spray with a wind traveling towards sensitive areas; do not spray in excessive wind; do not spray with boom too high.
- Communication is also very important. Find out where sensitive areas are; talk to your neighbors' to avoid conflict; have an understanding of what they are growing and what you intend to plant; and be able to tell your spray operator to stop if the conditions become unsuitable .
- Equipment setup and selection is most important. Correct nozzles, travel speed of 15-20 km/h, 70L/ha of water and coarse droplets are less susceptible to drift. Just raising the boom height from 500mm to 750mm increases the chance of drift by four times.
- Avoid undesirable weather conditions. The use of hand held weather monitors or stations and a Delta T chart (humidity and temperature combinations) helps you to plan perfect spraying opportunities.

The time is now. Don't mess this up for yourself or others. Don't let your chemical drift off target.