Chemical Savings - Part 3 - Spray Rate Controllers

In Chemical Savings Parts 1 & 2 we focused on the effects that proper nozzle care and calibration practices have on your wallet. This month we are going to change direction and talk a bit about automated spray rate controls.

Spray rate controllers aren't the latest in spraying technologies, but we still come across customers who haven't made the jump due to concerns that it will make spraying more complicated, or that it's too expensive. While it's true that you will need to learn a new trick or two, the manufacturers of these systems have done an excellent job of simplifying the process of programming the consoles to do what you need them to do. Many of the systems work similar to a flow chart, prompting you to the next stage in a nearly foolproof series of steps.

How basic flow based systems work...

Spray rate control consoles work by adjusting output to the boom in conjunction with the speed you are traveling at, and by the parameters you program into the console. A speed sensor tells the console how fast you are moving. A flow meter tells the console how much fluid you are applying and a control valve makes adjustments to accurately apply at the rate you selected.

If you are shopping for a rate controller you will still need to start with all those basic pieces of information you use to calibrate with currently. Your nozzles should still be sized within the speed, minimum and maximum gallons per acre and pressure ranges that work best for your situation(s). From there it's a decision of how advanced you want the system to be, or what information you want the system to provide. Systems are becoming so elaborate that they provide field mapping, total how much you applied to an area, or multiple areas and can provide data recording that can be downloaded to your personal computer for reporting and record keeping purposes.

If your into detailed management these tools will be the greatest thing since sliced bread. If you're not the micro managing type, keep it simple. Even lower priced systems can prove to be a good investment that will save you money in the long run.

If you decide to make the investment, cleaning and flushing your sprayer thoroughly will become more important than ever. The cost of the components that are subject to chemical exposure is reasonable, based on regular wear, but neglect will reduce the cost-effectiveness of your purchase and cause frustration.

If you have any questions, concerns or would like to share something that you have found helpful in your spraying practices e-mail to: pbm@pbmsprayers.com.