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Panhandle Ag Extra

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For several years I have considered writing a regular newsletter, but have always come to my senses before actually taking the plunge. Well, since you are reading the inaugural edition of PAGE ONE then you know I have actually taken the first big step - making the commitment. Plans are to write at least one newsletter on a bimonthly basis for the rest of the year. At that time I will re-evaluate --- or in other words, I'm leaving myself away to weasel out of the commitment. PAGE ONE will be just that, one page, maybe front and back if I'm really feeling wordy, which if you know me is probably not going to happen often. I'll try to give you my thoughts, or thoughts I have borrowed from others, on a wide range of timely topics addressing Panhandle agriculture. If you would like to continue receiving PAGE ONE, fill out the enclosed postcard and I will put you on the mailing list. So much for the formalities, now for a few thoughts.

New Corn Herbicides (or at least new packaging)

Several new corn herbicides are being marketed in 1999. One of the most widely advertised is **Balance**. You know, this is the one that doesn't give weeds a second chance (according to TV commercial). Actually I believe Balance will be a keeper. We have had Balance in studies for the last two years. It's performance overall has been favorable. Pigweed control has been about equal to that achieved with Bicep II. I know Rhone Poulenc is concerned about its activity on annual grass, but in my trials it has performed well when grass pressure was moderate. Its strength is in its ability to control velvetleaf. It should be the best product on the market for pre-emerge control of

velvetleaf. It also has the ability to kill small weeds that emerge prior to the herbicide being activated by rainfall or irrigation. My recommendation is to try Balance if you have a significant velvetleaf problem. If not, give it a year and make sure we do not get surprised by something (crop injury) when it is used on a wide scale in 1999. Another excellent velvetleaf herbicide that is available this year is **Aim**. Aim is being manufactured by FMC and should be applied post - emergence. Our trials have consistently shown excellent velvetleaf and pigweed control with Aim. It will need to be tank mixed with other herbicides for grass control and broader spectrum broadleaf weed control.

Axiom, manufactured by Bayer, is a pre-emergence herbicide which is actually a mix of two chemicals, a chloroacetamide which is the same chemical family you will find Dual, Lasso, and Harness, plus a little of the active ingredient found in Sencor. The premix with Sencor gives it a little broader activity. You can think of using it in a similar manner as Dual, Lasso, or Harness. We have not seen any crop injury with the product, but it is a concern of the company's on sandy soil.

Distinct is new product from BASF. It is a mix of dicamba, the active ingredient in Banvel, and diflufenzopyr, a chemical that has some activity by itself, but primarily has been found to increase the activity of other herbicides. My experience is that Distinct will control annual broadleaf weeds as well as Banvel, but at a lower rate. Distinct should also be more effective on larger weeds. One major difference from Banvel is that Distinct cannot be used in sorghum without causing significant injury. Although some grass

activity is present, control of most grasses will be minimal.

LeadOff is a new trade name for an older product called Guardsman. We have several years of experience with Guardsman which is being sold by BASF. LeadOff is being sold by Dupont. Both products contain atrazine plus the active ingredient found in Frontier. Frontier has similar activity as Dual, Harness, and Lasso, only used at a lower rate. My experience is that Guardsman will give similar control of most weeds as Bicep. Dupont is marketing LeadOff to be used preemergence followed by an application of Basis or Basis Gold. However, and this is what I do not understand, Dupont only wants you to use a half rate of LeadOff. Of course if only a half rate is used, there is an increased chance that the Basis treatment will need to be applied. The interesting thing is that Dupont will guarantee the success of this program. Anytime someone will guarantee a particular program in controlling weeds in the Texas Panhandle, it warrants consideration.

There are other new products labeled for corn, but these are the ones I am primarily asked about.

A final thought on corn. With the good soil moisture present many producers are anxious to begin planting. Keep in mind that as long as the soil temperature is below 50°F practically nothing is going on in the corn seed. Even at 55°F germination and emergence will be slow. At 50 to 55°F corn may take as long as 20 days to emerge depending on the conditions. The most important soil temperature in my mind is at the two inch depth, since this is closer to where the seed is

placed. The six or eight inch soil temperature is important in that it provides a buffering affect for the two inch temperature. The germination rate and time for seedling establishment is closely related to air temperature; 200 degree days above 50°F are required. The temperature at 2 inches under bare soil averages 3 to 4 degrees warmer than the air temperature, and is about the same if heavy crop residue is present. The daily and 10 day average soil temperature is reported daily from the North Plains PET network weather stations located across the Panhandle.

Did you know? It takes 25 gallons of water to produce an ear of corn.

Sunflower Weed Control. If the number of phone calls I have received concerning sunflower production is any indication there will be more acres of sunflowers in the Panhandle than we have had in a number of years. Unfortunately the herbicide options have not changed in a number of years. The basic program for most sunflower acres will be the application of Prowl or Treflan applied pre-plant incorporated. These herbicides can be applied by chemigation, but my experience is that weed control will be somewhat inconsistent with this method of application. Best results are achieved when the herbicides are applied pre-plant and thoroughly incorporated. A disk or field cultivator will do a good job of incorporation if properly set. Make to passes perpendicular to each other for uniform incorporation. Take care that you do not run the tillage equipment too deep. A rolling cultivator will to a good job of incorporation with a single pass when properly set.