

Media release

Friday, 15 December 2023

Think before you spray – plan and avoid drift

With the recent wet weather across much of the state, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) reminds producers to consider, not only their immediate neighbours, but also the potential for spray drift damage at distance from their property when planning spraying operations in coming weeks.

Concerns about spray drift impacts (particularly during hazardous inversion conditions) and reports about potential misuse of Overwatch herbicide in the Yorke Peninsula and Mid North areas has led to PIRSA emphasising to producers the importance on following label directions, best practice advice and closely monitoring weather conditions.

Climatic conditions since the beginning of summer across the state's agricultural areas have been favourable for weed and fungal disease establishment, making it highly likely that producers will need to undertake chemical control in coming weeks.

Without proper consideration and planning, chemical spraying comes with significant risks, particularly in regard to spray drift which can impact sensitive neighbouring crops, environments and even rural communities.

In investigating reports of spray drift, PIRSA will pursue any instances of deliberate or negligent use of chemicals in contravention of label instructions. The Department has a range of regulatory tools at its disposal ranging from education right through to strong compliance measures. PIRSA will consider using this full range of these tools in order to secure compliance with the legislation.

If you suspect incidents of spray drift in your neighborhood or other contraventions of the legislation you are encouraged to report to the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Hotline on 1300 799 684. Reports can be made anonymously although reporters are encouraged to share their details so follow up can occur if necessary.

Producers should expect PIRSA to be carrying out random, annual producer audits without warning along with undertaking surveillance the Mid North and Yorke Peninsula regions in coming weeks during hazardous inversion conditions.

Anyone found doing the wrong thing could face penalties up to \$35,000 per offence, reflecting the seriousness of not following mandatory label instructions.

To assist growers with spray operation planning, information on best practice chemical use, including the industry endorsed Code of Practice for Summer Weed Control, is available at www.pir.sa.gov.au/chemical-best-practice

For information on the current Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) 2,4-D requirements visit www.apvma.gov.au

Contact: PIRSA.media@sa.gov.au



Government of South Australia
Department of Primary Industries
and Regions

Quote from Michael McManus, Manager - Biosecurity Investigations and Operations at the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA):

With the recent wet weather we anticipate that there will be likely to be a significant amount of spraying likely to take place over summer and therefore absolute diligence will be required round planning and applying.

Given the potential for spray drift impacts to occur quite some distance away from the original spray application site, spray applicators cannot afford to overlook spray drift risks, no matter how far they are from a sensitive crop or neighbouring town.

It is of critical importance that no spraying take place under hazardous inversion weather conditions which generally exist from late in the evenings, right through the night until early morning. If a hazardous inversion is present or likely to occur, then the advice is 'do not spray'.

Hazardous inversion data in real time is now available across many cropping regions by subscribing to the COtL Mesonet which covers the Mid North, Riverland, Mallee, Limetone Coast and McLaren Vale regions.

Further refinement of the Mid North Mesonet now makes identifying the potential for hazardous inversion conditions much easier ensuring that spraying operations should really only be occurring when conditions are optimal.