Renewed Interest In Rope Wick Herbicide Applicators

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One of the more frequent questions this spring relates to minimizing costs. Herbicides, along with most everything else, seem to be more expensive in 2008. It may be time to bring back the older technology of a rope wick/weed wiper herbicide applicator.

Several farmers have had experience controlling volunteer corn and other tall weeds in soybeans with a rope wick applicator. Generic glyphosate became relatively economical, and most applications were then made by broadcast sprays to Roundup Ready Soybeans. A new higher price environment might renew interest in rope wicks.

The rope wick applicator is simply a method to wipe a concentrated herbicide solution over a weedy plant. The applicator requires height and flow adjustment to work well. Many variations are available.

A rope wick must have height differential between the crop and the weeds. Usually, at least 6 or more inches are required. Avoid wiping weeds when the foliage is dusty or wet. Two trips with the applicator, on the same day, in opposite directions are often required.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in using rope wick applicators. Some advantages include less herbicide, less concern about windy conditions, works well when there is a height difference and selective herbicides are not available. Finally, wiping is also considered more environmentally friendly because the herbicide is targeted to the weed. The primary disadvantage is the required height differential and limited boom width.

You can make your own rope wick applicator, buy a pre-assembled unit, or purchase a commercially produced model. Sizes range from handheld, to ATV versions, and field scale ag models. Some products also use canvas and materials other than rope. Δ