Water Saving Could Translate To Weed Disaster

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Resistance issues still top the list of weed concerns among farmers, and Anthony Ohmes, regional agronomy specialist in Mississippi County at Charleston, recently discussed the issue.

"The biggest issue that weed scientists throughout the whole area, from midwest to midsouth, are dealing with now is the flare up of resistance issues," he said. "Glyphosate is the big issue, but there's other little issues showing up. In rice there's some isolated issues of Command resistance. It's very isolated in a couple of counties in Arkansas but it's still one of those possibilities of a problem."

Last year barnyardgrass showed up in a lot of rice fields in Arkansas and other big rice growing areas. There also has been some concern with ALS issues, and coverage could have been an issue last year.

One question, he said, is: "Are we putting out enough water on these crops, or are we trying to cut back so we can save diesel fuel or whatever, to go across more acres with less water so that our five, six hundred gallon tank can go over more acres?"

Ohmes, who recently has been fielding many issues which earlier had been directed to Andy Kendig who recently left the Delta Center, said he thinks farmers are losing control of the weeds by cutting back on water.

"You go back to the old weed science principles of coverage, and you have to cover that leaf tissue with water, as water is carrying the product, it's carrying the herbicide, the fungicide, the insecticide, whatever you're spraying," he said. "But in herbicides, just like any of those other products, if you're not getting good leaf coverage, you're running the risk of that product not living up to it's highest potential and then you get these escapes. One or two weeds out there in the field doesn't look like a lot and economically that's not a big deal, but if it truly was a resistant weed and you let that go it can produce 200-plus, thousands of seeds on one healthy female palmer pigweed plant or waterhemp."

Another emerging issue is red rice escapes. Again, scientists are trying to pinpoint whether it was lack of good coverage or if there is some tolerance showing up. ALS chemistry in barnyardgrass in the Clearfield programs is also a concern. There are reports of barnyardgrass escaping in rice fields and scientists are trying to determine whether they are escapes or whether farmers thinned out their treatment too much.

"In Arkansas, Jason Norsworthy and the weed science crew there are intensively screening these weeds," he said. "Farmers can collect viable seed heads and put them in a brown envelope and they can go on the internet and find Jason's address and they can send it to him and he will screen those in his program. So if you have some escapes and you know that you put out the water and you know you did everything right and weeds still came through, you can send a seedhead, from a soybean, rice or cotton field. The things that they're probably looking at are barnyardgrass for potential resistance to Command or other products and in soybeans they're naturally screening for predominately glyphosate resistance."

If farmers send in the seedhead, it would be helpful to the researcher to get an idea of the scope of the problem throughout the area. Δ

Anthony Ohmes, Regional Agronomy Specialist in Mississippi County at Charleston, recently discussed the resistance issue.
Photo by John LaRose