

DON'T PUT AWAY THAT SPRAYER!

Properly maintaining your hand or ATV sprayer will prolong its life

By Mary McKinney

Now that the days are shorter and the need for that pesticide sprayer may have passed, don't be tempted to push it to the back of the shop without performing important maintenance tasks.

Keeping equipment clean throughout the season is an ongoing process, but cleaning and winterizing pesticide sprayers can prevent repairs or replacements next spring.

Read the Label!

The following are **general** guidelines. Before beginning, read and follow any requirements on the label of any pesticides used. This includes donning proper personal protective equipment and following special instructions regarding specific cleaning products and procedures. Clean equipment in an area that rinsate, liquids rinsed from a container, will not contaminate water supplies, streams, or crops, and in an area inaccessible to children, pets, and livestock. Pay particular attention to sensitive vegetation in the runoff area.

Clean the spray equipment. Consult label!

Some household products may be used including but not limited to:

- Laundry detergent.
- Household ammonia is effective at penetrating and loosening deposits and residues in the spraying system. Ammonia can increase pH making some products more soluble in water and help loosen deposits. Ammonia can also be used to neutralize any chemical deposits left in a spray tank when switching from one product to another (allow to sit overnight).
- Chlorine bleach can decompose residues of most sulfonyleurea and other herbicides. **Caution!** Care must be used with chlorine bleach to prevent mixing with ammonia (found in fertilizers) to prevent dangerous chlorine gas. Disposal of rinsate containing chlorine bleach should also be considered.

Run the cleaning solution through the entire system by operating the pump. Flush the cleaning solution through the hoses, wands, screens, and/or boom nozzles.

Mary McKinney, *sprayer maintenance extraordinaire*, is assistant supervisor of the Park County Weed and Pest Control District. She can be reached at 307-527-8885 or at mmckinney@parkcounty.us.

Rinse the system. Fill the tank and operate pump until empty to flush any residues left in the equipment. Repeat two or three times (more for difficult-to-remove residues). Inspect all hoses, nozzles, screens, etc., to ensure all residues have been removed. These items may require separate cleaning or rinsing.

* *As noted above, do not mix rinsates of bleach and ammonia.*

Winterize equipment using antifreeze. There are several options available for winterizing, including some low-toxicity varieties. Automotive-type products may be less corrosive than RV-type antifreezes (www.techline-news.com). **Caution! Automotive antifreeze is toxic.** Proper use and disposal is required. Operate the pump system to move antifreeze throughout the entire system. Remember, collect and properly dispose of any antifreeze that discharges from the system. In the spring, drain/rinse tanks and components by operating pumps to remove any antifreeze. Collect and dispose of the rinsate according to antifreeze labels.

Following a routine maintenance process for sprayers not only increases the life of the equipment but can also save money on replacement parts. Avoid the frustration of finding out a wand has split or a seal failed from not winterizing the sprayer. Inspect sprayers during this process and repair and replace any broken or worn parts.

For more information on winterizing sprayers, check out the Web or ask a local weed and pest professional. Remember, consult the label first!



TAKE THE TIME!

Taking some time to keep equipment clean during the season will make end-of-the-season tasks easier. If a lot of a dry formulation chemical (Escort, Telar, for example) was used during the season, rinsing the sprayers as soon as possible after use will prevent buildup and caking in the system. This prevents time-consuming and costly repairs of pumps, valves, and solenoids.