



# How to use GPS to help calibrate sprayers

By Dana Erdman

Weed control season is quickly approaching!

When considering chemical treatments, a **very important** element that can be overlooked is calibration of a sprayer – whether a backpack, ATV, or trailer-mounted (see “Calibrating sprayer most important step before treating weeds” available at barnyard-sandbackyards.com, click on Archives, then 2008 Issues, then Spring).

Speed is an important factor in calibration. An accurate speed must be maintained to ensure even ground coverage and that the required amount of chemical is being applied – not too much, not too little.

Most calibrations call for speeds of between 3-5 miles per hour. The average person walks at about 3 miles per hour. Gauging that low of a speed with a vehicle speedometer is difficult. So, when pulling a sprayer

behind a vehicle, how do you know how fast you should be driving and if you are maintaining that speed?

A Global Positioning System (GPS) is the answer.

**1** A truck speedometer is not useful at low speeds. The speedometer does not show small enough miles per hour increments and usually is not accurate when driving that slowly.

**2** A GPS will show accurate ground speed. For example, this Garmin GPS has a “Pointer Page” that guides the user to a destination. This page has an accurate speedometer even at walking speeds.

**3** Driving a vehicle, operating a sprayer, and running a GPS all at the same time is not an easy task!

**4** Attaching the GPS to the dash of a truck or tractor will allow the operator to see the screen and monitor speed while leaving hands

free. Having the GPS unit on the dash also allows the GPS to acquire and keep a strong satellite signal.

**5** Don’t have a dash-mounted GPS holder? A pop can and tape can do the trick. Simply tape the pop can to the dash (test the tape you plan to use and be sure it doesn’t damage the dashboard) and then tape the GPS to the pop can.

**6** After you turn the GPS on, wait until the GPS has finished tracking satellites, has acquired sufficient satellite signal, and is “ready to navigate. Have the screen showing “Speed” displayed.

Now the GPS will remain in view as you drive, hands-free, allowing you to maintain calibration and spraying speed requirements. This will help ensure even coverage at the correct rate for optimum weed control.

**Remember: it is federal law to follow chemical labels and rates!**

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