

APPENDIX L MAINTENANCE, CLEANING AND STORAGE OF SPRAYERS

MAINTENANCE, CLEANING AND STORAGE OF GROUND SPRAYERS¹

Proper maintenance and storage techniques not only streamline the following year's preseason preparations, but also enhance sprayer performance while adding years to its productive life.

Long-term exposure to many pesticides that pass through a sprayer can corrode and deteriorate sprayer parts, paint and electrical connections. The residue from these products may be harmful to anyone working on or around the machine. Also, trace amounts of pesticides lodged in sprayer parts may damage crops if carried over to the next spraying season.

Your personal safety and that of your family, employees and your crops make it important that you thoroughly clean and decontaminate your sprayer during the season, between crops and before you store it for the winter.

A complete maintenance and storage process consists of six steps: Read, Rinse, Drain, Clean, Inspect, and Store.

Read. Read before you begin cleaning your sprayer, be sure to review the label of the pesticides you've applied. The label will:

- Tell you how to properly dispose of residual product.
- Provide any special cleaning instructions that might be necessary.
- Recommend decontaminating products.
- Outline the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you need to safely clean your sprayer.

Rinse. The goal of rinsing is to remove any concentrated or large areas of the product that might still be in or on the sprayer.

Cleaning spray equipment involves circulating water through the whole system and then applying it to a site that is listed on the label of the pesticides you have used. Several rinses using a small volume (up to 10 percent of the spray tank capacity) are better than merely filling the spray tank once with clean water. Select a location where the rinsate will not contaminate water supplies, streams, crops or other plants and where large puddles won't accumulate, creating a hazard to humans, animals and the environment.

Preferably, the area should be impervious to water and have a wash rack or cement apron with a sump to catch contaminated wash water and pesticides.

Make sure that you drain the spray tank in a manner consistent with the pesticide label. Don't just open the valves and let it pour on the ground.

Add larger volume nozzle tips for a faster and legal method to dispose of sprayer rinsate. The outside of the sprayer should also be washed. For this purpose, applicators are encouraged to have a source of water on the sprayer in order to rinse down the sprayer in the field on a regular basis. Again, when rinsing the sprayer, do not create standing puddles that might be accessible to children, pets, livestock or wildlife.

Drain. To dispose of pesticide rinsate in accordance with label directions, apply the rinsate to a site where the products are to be used originally. In other words, the site must be listed on the label. Repeat the draining process after decontaminating and re-rinsing the sprayer. Drain any clean water rinse tanks prior to storage to avoid damage caused by water freezing inside.

Clean. After the sprayer has been rinsed and drained, then clean or decontaminate it. Be sure to decontaminate both the interior and exterior of the machine, running liquid through the boom structure and out the nozzles. There is no need to fill the sprayer. Use only enough cleaning solution to completely fill the lines and provide enough agitation. There may be a need to scrub or power wash the inside of the tank. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Select cleaning agents based on the pesticide and formulation used (see Table below).

¹ MT State University Extension Service, 2003. MontGuide #8917. <http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/pubs/mt8917.html>

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TABLE L – 1. CLEANING SOLUTIONS

Pesticide Used	25 Gallons Cleaning Solution	2.5 Gallons Cleaning Solution	Instructions
Hormone herbicides, ester form. (2,4-D, brush killers, dicamba)	1 Qt. household ammonia	1/2 cup household ammonia	Agitate solution 10-15 minutes, flush small amount through system and let remainder stand overnight. Flush and rinse with clean water.
	OR	OR	
	2 lb. trisodium phosphate	1/4 lb. trisodium phosphate	Same as above except let stand for at least 2 hours.
	OR	OR	
	1/2 lb. fine activated charcoal + 1/2 cup powder detergent*	2 tablespoons fine activated charcoal and 1-2 oz. powder detergent	Agitate; operate sprayer for 2 min., let remainder stand for 10 min., then flush through sprayer. Rinse with clean water.
Hormone herbicides, ester form. (2,4-D, brush killers)	1 lb. washing soda (sal soda) + 1 gal kerosene + 1/4 lb. powder detergent*	4 oz. washing soda (sal soda) + 1 1/2 cups kerosene + 1 Tablespoon powder detergent*	Rinse inside of tank and flush small amount through system. Let stand at least 2 hours. Flush and rinse with clean water
Other herbicides	1/4 lb. powder detergent*	1 Tablespoon powder detergent*	Rinse with clean water before and after using sudsy solution.

*Liquid detergent may be substituted for powder detergent; mix at rate to make a sudsy solution.

Cleaning agents should penetrate and dissolve pesticide residues and allow them to be removed when the rinsate is removed from the sprayer. Commercial tank cleaning agents and detergents help remove both water- and oil-soluble herbicides and are recommended on many pesticide labels.

Some tank cleaning agents and ammonia solutions raise the pH of the rinsate solution, making some products such as sulfonylurea (SU) herbicides more water soluble and thus easier to remove from internal sprayer parts.

Chlorine bleach solutions hasten the breakdown of SU's and some other herbicides into inactive compounds. However, chlorine is less effective at dissolving and removing SU herbicide residues from spray tanks than ammonia solutions. Never add chlorine bleach to ammonia or liquid fertilizers containing ammonia, because the two materials react to form toxic chlorine gas.

Fuel oil or kerosene is effective for removing oil-soluble herbicides such as esters and emulsifiable concentrates. The fuel oil or kerosene should be followed by a detergent rinse to remove the oily residue. Also run cleaning solution throughout the sprayer, including the agitation system and the return lines. Then rinse the system with clean water. Open all nozzles until they are spraying pure water.

Inspect. After the final rinse you can inspect your sprayer and make the necessary repairs and modifications.

Even though the sprayer has been "cleaned," always wear personal protective equipment. Some residue may remain on and in the sprayer.

Here is a checklist of what to look for both during and after cleaning:

- Mismatched and worn nozzles
- Damaged nozzle screens
- Damaged strainer screens
- Cracks, leaks and overall performance in the pump.
- Hose condition, especially brittleness or cracks
- Valve condition, identifying any possible leaks or areas where seals may have loosened
- Boom structure, identifying any cracks that must be fixed

Modifications

Some modifications might include:

- Shut-off valves on either side of the pump to facilitate pump removal and repair
- Shut-off valves at the boom
- Shut-off valves at the tank
- Additional pressure gauges
- Installing flowmeters
- Installing tank level indicators

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- By-pass and agitation lines
- Engine-kill switches
- Additional lines to aid in cleaning, i.e. broadjets for spraying out rinsate as opposed to using boom

6. Store

Now that the sprayer has been thoroughly cleaned, you may want to remove parts of it that may be damaged during storage.

- Remove strainers (filters) and wash them by hand with soapy water (remember to wear chemical-resistant gloves), rinse them and either store them or place them back in the sprayer.
- Pay special attention to nozzles, nozzle bodies and check valves. Chemical residue can build up in these areas and harden over winter, dramatically reducing the sprayer's performance next season.
- Remove nozzle tips, screens, check valves, caps and nozzle bodies from the nozzle body assemblies. Correctly plug the assemblies.
- Clean and rinse out the nozzle tips, nozzle bodies and check valves. Store in a marked container. Store check valves at room temperature over the winter to avoid damage that can be caused by freezing temperatures.
- Remove all pressure gauges and cap the openings on the sprayer. Store the gauges where they are not subjected to freezing or damage.

Finally, circulate antifreeze through the sprayer and all plumbing, including booms, valves, manifolds, flowmeters and agitation/return lines. Allow the antifreeze to circulate through the boom's hoses. This will coat the hose linings to prevent drying out and cracking. Capping all boom nozzles will help retain the antifreeze in the system, but you may need to open one or two nozzles to allow the antifreeze to circulate through the boom. Cap those nozzles when antifreeze has completely filled the system.

The goal for the storage phase is for the antifreeze to push out residual water that may be in the system and to coat all of the sprayer's components. Allow the antifreeze to sit in the pump and valves to avoid rusting and damage that can be caused by moist air being trapped in the system. Since some applicators remove the pump prior to storage, the installation of shut-off valves on either side of the pump can facilitate this process.

Anti-freeze for recreational vehicles (RV's) is commonly used for storage of agricultural sprayers. Unlike automotive antifreeze, it is less toxic to animals. While many RV antifreeze products will gel in extremely cold conditions, they should not freeze. Regardless, always read the antifreeze label to make sure it will perform under your winter conditions.

Once the sprayer has been cleaned, decontaminated and winterized, it is ready to be stored. Obviously, indoor storage, away from the abuse of the elements, is preferable. But any indoor site should be far away from both liquid and dry fertilizers. The dust and residue from these products can corrode both paint and hardware on the sprayer.

If there is a spray monitor, remove the display pad from the cab and store it in a warm, dry place.

FOAM MARKERS AND FLOWMETERS

Cleaning and winterizing sprayers includes the foam marker system and any flowmeters. Start with the marker system. Disassemble the foam generators, then clean residue from the mixing filters and screens using clean water and the appropriate cleaning solution. Consult the manufacturer's instructions of the foam marker to determine if specialized cleaning solutions are needed.

By not cleaning out the spongy mixing filter, the residual foaming agent may harden, making it nearly impossible to clean later.

To clean the flowmeter, follow procedures outlined in the manufacturer's instructions. Otherwise, use the following procedure where applicable. One should determine if any warranties are affected.

- Disconnect the wiring harness from the electrical connector on the sensor.
- Unscrew the flowmeter insert and remove.
- Clean insert with clean, soapy water. Make sure the turbine turns easily. If it doesn't, clean again.
- Reinstall insert in flowmeter.
- Attach electrical connector to sensor.

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MAINTAINING SPRAYER EQUIPMENT

Maintenance of pesticide application equipment includes regular inspection of the spray tank, pump, hoses, line strainers, pressure gauge, fittings, nozzle tips and strainers. Check the sprayer prior to and following extended storage, and before each use. **Always wear personal protective equipment when handling spray equipment.**

Spray tanks: Spray tanks are made of stainless or galvanized steel, fiberglass or plastic, including polyethylene or polypropylene. These materials are fairly non-absorptive, so no pesticide residues should be left in them after being cleaned. However, fiberglass tank linings, if scratched, will absorb pesticides. Cracks and chips in the epoxy coating of galvanized tanks must be repaired with epoxy material; otherwise, the exposed metal may corrode. Periodically check tanks for cracks, rust or corrosion that will weaken the tank and eventually develop into a leak. Make sure the spray tank is securely fastened to the sprayer

Pump and pump seals: The pump and all its components must be in good working condition. Pump seals, 'O' rings or cup washers of leather or synthetic material may dry out and shrink if the sprayer has not been used for an extended period or stored improperly. The solvents in some pesticide formulations can damage pump seals, resulting in leaks around the pump or inefficient pumping.

Hoses: Replace hoses that are cracked or leaking. Hoses used to apply pesticides can never be completely decontaminated. There will always be some pesticide residue left in them. Those that are replaced must be properly disposed of and not reused for any other purpose.

Line strainers and screens: Always use strainers and screens when the equipment is in operation. These filter out debris and foreign particles that can plug nozzles and reduce sprayer performance.

Pressure gauges: Fluid pressure in the spray system is monitored by a pressure gauge. The gauge measures spray pressure through the nozzles when located between the pressure regulator and the spray nozzles. Consequently, a change in pressure can mean a potential malfunction. Make sure pressure gauges are in good working condition and properly calibrated.

Fittings and clamps: Loose or cracked fittings are frequently a source of leaks. Make sure fittings and clamps are snug prior to putting the system under pressure and pumping liquid. Once the system is under pressure, check for leaks.

Nozzle tips and strainers: Check nozzles routinely to make sure they are not plugged. Worn nozzles mean more chemical sprayed and often result in an irregular spray pattern and inconsistent results. Nozzle openings may also change, especially when abrasive formulations, such as wettable powders, are frequently used.

Replace them when wear causes flow to exceed that of a new tip by five to 10 percent.

For example, suppose the nozzle tip manufacturer states that your particular nozzle tips should provide 50 ounces of flow per minute at 30 pounds per square inch (psi). Use an error range of 10 percent (0.10). By using a calculator, simply multiply 50×0.10 and add to 50 to find the upper limit; $50 \text{ ounces} \times 0.10 = 5 \text{ ounces}$. Then $5 \text{ ounces} + 50 \text{ ounces} = 55 \text{ ounces}$.

Now subtract 5 ounces from 50 ounces to find the lower limit; $50 \text{ ounces} - 5 \text{ ounces} = 45 \text{ ounces}$. Any flow at 30 psi that is between 45 and 55 ounces of flow per minute is acceptable. Anything above 55 ounces or below 45 ounces per minute is not acceptable and you may consider changing the nozzle tips.

If nozzle flow is less than expected, clean the nozzles and try again. The nozzles may only be plugged.

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PERSONAL PROTECTION IN HERBICIDE HANDLING²

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Herbicide labels indicate the minimum protective equipment required. This may vary by application technique. Cotton, leather, canvas, and other absorbent materials are not chemical resistant, even to dry formulations.

- Always wear at least a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, sturdy shoes or boots, and socks. The more layers of fabric and air between you and the pesticide, the better the protection.
- Contact the manufacturer for recommendations for protective clothing barriers for gloves, suits, and boots.
- A thick layer of spray starch on clothing will add some protection from pesticides.
- Hands and forearms usually receive the most pesticide exposure. Wear chemical-resistant gloves, and tuck shirt sleeves into gloves (gloves should reach up the forearm, with cuffs to catch runs and drips).
- Canvas, cloth, and leather shoes or boots are almost impossible to clean adequately. Wear chemical-resistant rubber boots that come up at least halfway to the knee if the lower legs and feet will be exposed to herbicides or residues.

AVOIDING CONTAMINATION

- Wear chemical-resistant gloves (rubber or plastic such as butyl, nitrile, or polyvinyl chloride are common types).
- Make sure gloves are clean, in good condition, and worn properly. Replace gloves often. Wash and dry hands before putting on gloves. Wash gloves before removing them.
- Wash hands thoroughly before eating, drinking, using tobacco products, or going to the bathroom.
- Cuff gloves if pesticide is expected to run down towards the sleeves. Tuck sleeves into gloves.

EYE AND RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

- PPE labeling might require goggles, face shields, or safety glasses with shields. Some formulas or handling activities pose more risks to eyes than others. Dusts, concentrates, and fine sprays have the highest risk of causing pesticide exposure.
- There are many types of dust-mist masks and respirators, all of which must fit and be used properly to be effective.
- Respiratory protection is most important in enclosed spaces or when the applicator will be exposed to pesticides for a long time.
- Pesticides that can volatilize require the use of respirators. Check label requirements.

PERSONAL CLEAN-UP AFTER HERBICIDE USE

- Wash gloves and footwear (if possible) with detergent and water before removing them.
- Change clothing and put clothes used during application in a plastic box or bag, and keep it away from children or pets. Use a mild liquid detergent and warm water to wash your hands, forearms, face, and any other body parts that may have been exposed to pesticides. Take a warm shower and wash your hair and body at the end of the work day.

LAUNDRY

- Do not wash work clothing and personal protective equipment in the same wash water with the family laundry. Handle with care and wash your hands after loading the machine.
- If you have chemical-resistant items, follow the manufacturer's washing instructions. Wash boots and gloves with hot water and liquid detergent. Wash twice, once outside and once inside. Air-dry boots and gloves.
- Rinse clothes in a machine or by hand.
- Wash in plenty of water for dilution and agitation.
- If using a washing machine, using heavy-duty liquid detergent in hot water for the wash cycles.
- After washing the clothes, run the washer through one complete cycle with detergent and hot water, but no clothing, to clean the machine.
- Hang items to dry if possible in plenty of fresh air. Do not hang in living areas.
- Using a clothes dryer is acceptable, but over time the machine may become contaminated with pesticide residues.

² Adapted from Ohio State University's Extension Publication #825 "Applying Pesticides Correctly" by Jennifer Hillmer, The Nature Conservancy-Ohio

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PROCEDURES FOR MIXING, LOADING, DISPOSAL, AND STORAGE OF HERBICIDES

- All mixing of pesticides will occur at least 100 feet from surface waters or wellheads or per label.
- Dilution water will be added to the spray container prior to addition of the herbicides.
- All hoses used to add dilution water to spray containers will be equipped with a device to prevent back siphoning.
- Applicators will mix only those quantities of herbicide that can be reasonably used in a day.
- Prior to mixing, determine the order that chemicals will be added to the mix. Generally, adjuvants are added prior to the herbicide, but consult the label for specific instructions. When mixing, start by filling the spray tank or other mixing vessel half to three-quarters full with water. The water should be clean and clear to prevent contamination of the mixture or clogging of tank nozzles and hoses. The water should have a neutral or slightly acidic pH, as alkaline water can cause the pesticide to breakdown prior to application. Add a buffer or acidifier to the water if necessary (see Appendix K).
- Avoid metal measuring utensils as some pesticides can react with metal. Carefully measure the herbicide concentrate and add it to the tank water.
- Small measuring errors can lead to large errors in the amount of pesticide applied. Be aware of if you are using the active ingredient (a.i.) or acid equivalent (a.e.) of the herbicide (see Appendix L). The measuring container should be rinsed and the rinsate added to the tank solution.
- During mixing, mixers will wear all necessary personal protective equipment as required by the pesticide label and the Health and Safety handbook.
- All empty containers will be triple rinsed and the solution will be disposed of by spraying near the application site at rates that do not exceed those on the spray site.
- All unused pesticide will be stored in a locked building, with spill containment and meet requirements of a temporary pesticide facility FSH 2109, 40.
- All empty and rinsed herbicide containers will be punctured and properly disposed of. If the herbicide label states that the container may not be disposed of in regular sanitary landfills, call your county or municipal waste department for information on Hazardous Material Collection dates.
- After use, first clean and store application equipment and then thoroughly rinse personal protection gear (gloves, boots, etc.) with cold water from a hose or container that is hand-held (gloves off) and was not used during application work. All personal protection gear should then be washed in mild soap and water. Finally, applicators should wash their hands and any herbicide-exposed areas of their bodies. Applicators should shower and change clothing as soon as possible. Clothes used during the application must be washed and dried separately from other clothing before it is worn again, even if it appears uncontaminated.

EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Applicators must have easy access to emergency decontamination and first aid kits whenever they are applying herbicides, even if they are out in the field. All applicators should have access to an eyewash kit and at least 2 gallons of clean water. Decontamination kits are available from many suppliers or can be assembled independently. Rubber buckets or tubs with tight sealing lids are convenient for homemade kits and should include:

- Two (or more) 1 gallon containers filled with potable water,
- Eyewash kits or eyewash bottles with buffered isotonic eyewash,
- Hand or body soap (bring enough for all workers to thoroughly wash their hands when in the field),
- Paper or other disposable towels,
- A full tyvek coverall with foot covers,
- A map and directions to the nearest medical facilities.

POSTING TREATED AREAS

Federal requirements for posting treated areas, if any, are listed on the herbicide label. Always keep treated areas off limits to the public at least until the herbicide dries. Treated areas may be kept off limits for longer periods if the herbicide is persistent in the environment. When posting areas that are accessible to the public (trails, trailheads, camping areas, etc.), place notices at the usual points of entry or along the perimeter of treated sites. The posting should include a notice that the area has or will be treated, the name of the herbicide used, the date of the treatment, appropriate precautions to be taken, the date when re-entry is judged to be safe, and a phone number for additional information. The notices should be removed after it is judged safe to re-enter the area.

AERIAL SAFETY

Aerial applications require an additional air safety plan, FHS 6709.11 (22.11b), 2109-14. Also see Protection Measures outlined in Appendix C and Aerial Treatment Guidelines in Appendix N.