



# Central Alberta Co-op Ltd.

## Tee'ing off on Weeds – What Does Golf Have to Do with Weed Control?

We are all familiar with the statement “Begin with the end in mind”, and farming is no different. Harvest becomes the foundation for next years crop plan. Harvest is the time to gather feedback and collect results from all the efforts throughout the summer. I want to focus on weed control feedback and herbicide performance. As farmers travel over the field this fall with the sprayer, swather, combine, truck, and baler they get to survey every inch of their fields and assess their weed type, species, distribution, and populations. It becomes obvious now when the crops are mature, what weed control measures worked and what attempts failed, leaving wild oats, and thistles towering above the wheat waving at your neighbours driving down the road. Or cleavers and chickweed providing that “cover-crop” between the rows you never planned on.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the industry standard approach to preventing pest infestations (weeds, disease, insects) in a safe, economical, and effective manner. At its core, IPM is a collaborative approach utilizing as many methods, strategies, and techniques possible to mitigate weed resistance and spread. The 5 main treatments of an IPM are: 1) Cultural – crop rotation, 2) Mechanical – tillage, 3) Biological – natural predators, 4) Behavioural – insect pheromones, 5) Chemical – herbicide. The idea is that each treatment on its own has limitations, but combined the results magnify the effectiveness and longevity of the control over the target. An IPM is the sum of its parts.

As usual the weather has the last say when it comes to managing weed infestations. Farmers know all too well that June’s in-crop spray season is too windy, too hot, too cold, too wet which emphasizes the importance of diversifying your weed control solutions. Not only do we need to manage the weed, but we need to look at the bigger picture and manage the field, and that starts this fall. From an IPM perspective, consider what crop was planted this year – is there excess straw? Perhaps fall tillage (Mechanical) can provide weed control, while incorporating Avadex or Edge granular herbicide (Chemical) and prepping the seedbed to establish a competitive crop stand (Cultural). My point is, by the time we spray in June and realize the herbicide was not 100% effective for one reason or another, it’s usually too late, and this year’s problem becomes next year’s worry.

Compare Integrated Pest Management to the game of golf. You don’t go to the golf course with only one club in your bag, and before you line up on the tee-box you know what par is. Each hole is like a new field, different clubs/different weeds, it’s a “death by a thousand cuts” approach (in my case quite literally), but the more angles we attack weeds from, the better the chance of getting over or around the sand traps and the natural defences of the weed. By using a variety of techniques, we avoid putting all our eggs in one basket, and our chance of selecting weed populations for herbicide resistance dramatically decrease. Using the same approach year after year and expecting different results is a gamble not a plan. So, when travelling over the fields this fall keep some records, take an inventory of species and populations, and talk with your agronomist on how to build your own IPM plan. If Mother Nature allows us time to do some field work after harvest, lets take advantage and get a head-start on next season.

Submitted by Calvin Ireland, CCA, Central Alberta Coop (Lacombe)

