

Media Release

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Good advice helps grower reduce chemical inputs

Robin Murphy was surprised to discover he was applying up to three times more chemical than he actually needed on *Malari*, his mixed beef and grain enterprise near Emerald in central Queensland.

Through his involvement in the Grains Best Management Practice (BMP) program, Mr Murphy was able to access expert advice and is now saving money and the environment by using chemicals more efficiently.

“I realized I had been using the incorrect nozzles and applying much more chemical than I needed - I was applying three tanks of chemical mix to a paddock where I only needed one tank,” Mr Murphy said.

“Already I have saved close to \$1400 per spray in a season on this particular paddock.”

Grains BMP is a voluntary industry benchmarking process developed in partnership between AgForce, the Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated (FBA), and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

FBA engaged local Emerald-based group CHRRUP (Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning cooperative) to guide growers like Robin Murphy through Grains BMP via workshops and follow-up support.

FBA also engaged two spray equipment and technique experts with funds under the Reef Rescue component of the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country to help growers undertaking the pesticide application module of Grains BMP.

Mr Murphy worked with the consultants, who assessed his spray rig and gave recommendations on nozzle selection and other modifications to improve chemical application and reduce non-target drift into sensitive areas like waterways.

“Other components such as taking note of the correct chemical mixing order, the use of adjuvants, and setting up the system to make it more efficient, have also helped me a lot,” Mr Murphy said.



Robin Murphy shows CHRRUP field officer Vicki Horstman his modified spray rig.

“During the training it became clear to me there is a definite need for documentation, an important part of the BMP process, so I purchased a hand held weather meter, a calibration kit and got hold of a log book,” he said.

“All these tools are helping me ensure that I am applying the correct amount of chemical and that I am applying it during the most suitable weather conditions.”

FBA’s Sustainable Landscapes Coordinator Piers Harper said in 2010 the consultants visited more than 40 growers to help them reduce the potential for pesticide movement to the Great Barrier Reef through reduction in overlap and accidental over-application of pesticides.

“The consultants also improved growers’ skills and knowledge in using the correct settings for their equipment and situation, which promotes lasting benefits in reducing pesticide movement off-farm,” Mr Harper said.

CHRRUP field officer Vicki Horstman said once Mr Murphy had received advice and improved his understanding of spray application he was able to work with CHRRUP to develop an individual project.

“Growers who complete BMP modules and access training may then be eligible to access financial incentives through FBA to help them modify their equipment or purchase new equipment,” Mrs Horstman said.

“CHRRUP assists growers to navigate through this process to plan projects that fit within the guidelines and will make a measurable difference at the paddock scale and for their overall enterprise, as well as at the catchment scale.”

FBA media contact: Jody McDonald on 49992800, 0429992808, or email jody.mcdonald@fba.org.au.