

Book review

Telling the story of alternate weed control

Controlling weeds with fewer chemicals

Edited by Craig Cramer and the staff of The New Farm

Published by the Rodale Institute, 222 Main St., Emmaus PA 18098

\$19.95 US

This is the fourth in a series of farmer-to-farmer idea books put out by the Rodale Institute.

This handbook is divided into five chapters with an appendix containing addresses of organizations who have additional information. Of course, this being an American publication, most of the organizations included are in the U.S.

For the novice, the first chapter gives an introduction into why herbicides are not the be-all-and-end-all of a weed control program. As well as providing financial figures and environmental statistics to prove their point, the authors explain the key elements in a good preventative weed control program.

Chapters 2 and 3 deal with weed control in row crops and pastures respectively. For the initiated, much of the information will not be new. The chapter on row crops covers many of the important factors in a weed control program: cover crops, tillage, rotation, manure management and herbicide banding. The forage section is a bit weak as it does not include much information on herbicide-free methods of renovating or establishing pastures. There is information on biological control but the application of the examples under Canadian conditions is questionable.

One of the most interesting chapters deals with weed control in fruits and vegetables. Rarely are horticulturalists able to find this type of information in one spot (I know, I am one). There are sections on mechanical weeders, cover crops, mulches and mowing.

One section deals with the use of "weeder" geese; many will have heard of this technique before but details of their effectiveness are scarce. The authors have gone as far as to calculate the savings in weed control requirements and compare them to the added costs involved in managing the geese. In the example, the geese netted an average of \$222/ac more for the producer.

Another chapter reviews in detail the advantages and disadvantages of different mechanical weeding devices and flame weeders. In addition, there are sections on electronic guidance systems and design considerations when choosing a weeder.

Typical of the Rodale style, the information is presented as a collage of articles grouped under different chapters. For some, this style

makes for a pleasant Sunday afternoon of reading, but for others who want to find the information in a catalogued format, it may not be quite what they are looking for. You have to have the time to read an entire chapter, sit back and then decide what the important information is.

For the novice who is just starting to look at ways to reduce herbicide use, *Controlling Weeds with Fewer Chemicals* provides a good base from which to start. For those already on their way, the book is a useful reference and gives a few extra ideas. For the experts, don't bother.

Ontario farm well tests

Agriculture Canada will be conducting a ground water quality survey of 1,500 wells across Ontario this fall to test the quality and safety of drinking water for farm families and to determine the effects farming has on water. Water samples will be tested for bacteria and nitrates, and may also be tested for pesticides. Results from individual water tests will be kept confidential with the cooperator.

Source: *The Rural Voice*, Dec. 1991.

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