FARM MANAGEMENT ASPECTS.

By - Mr.A. Amos, Ashburton.

Most farmers are generally wary of any new ideas pertaining to their industry. They suspect some new means being devised to separate them from their hard earned profits.

The application of chemical sprays for weed control should present no difficulties to the average farmer. The agricultural engineer, has designed a spraying outfit at a moderate cost that is easy to operate, and can be applied to any tractor or farm truck. Further if the farmer is mechanically minded, he can construct his own outfit at about half the cost of the commercial article.

He has to hand his literature issued by the Agriculture Department on Chemical Methods of Weed Control, and if this is followed closely, with the instructions on the containers of the chemical sprays, the application of the spray should present no difficulties. It is a decided advantage for a farmer to have his own spraying outfit especially if he is an agricultural farmer, and is growing much spring crops, because the time of application is an important factor. Contractors cannot always be relied on to be on the job at the right time.

It is on the arable farm, that I have seen the greatest benefit from chemical sprays, especially in spring sown crops.

In the past I hated sowing spring crops, because of the danger of weed infestation, but now my confidence has been restored by the use of chemical sprays. May I quote some of my experiences over the last two years.

A crop of barley sown last spring and over-sown with cocksfoot and white clover was very badly infested with fathen, wild turnip and californian thistle. I decided to spray it. The state of the crop at the time of spraying was:- The barley in the shot blade about nine inches high, the wild turnip and thistles just starting to show above the crop and the fathen 3 to four inches high. If I had had my own plant at the time, instead of getting a contractor, it would have been sprayed a fortnight earlier. The contractor's outfit, mounted on a truck, worked very efficiently, applying 3lb 2,4-D as a spray per acre. The weather was hot with no wind. The result was excellent. Wild turnip disappeared, fathen did not show further growth and the thistle wilted down to ground level. A control plot yielded 14 bus. per acre, the rest of the field 41 bus. per acre. No damage was apparent to cocksfoot or white clover.

Experiments carried out the previous season on an oat crop, gave surprising results. The plot treated gave approximately 30% less yield of chaff, but the grade was first quality G.B.O.I. chaff, while the untreated yielded a line that was unsaleable, because it was so badly infested with thistles and fathen.

Chemical control of weeds in spring crops is an economic proposition to the agricultural farmer, even if the contractor charges 27/- per acre. It is still better if the farmer has his own plant, and does the work himself.

How does weed control come into farm management? It comes in at the time of year just prior to the rush work of harvesting. One man with a tractor or truck can do big acreages in a day - even with a knap-sack outfit quite useful work can be done. Spraying time may clash with hay making, but with present day methods this is not a big job.

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