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March mayhem: Spring weed control options

One can't be sure if spring is going to arrive this year, yet April is right around the corner. April 1st marks a cutoff date for growers and applicators for applications of some herbicides especially in Milton-Freewater and the adjacent Walla Walla Valley areas.

Grapes continue to be the most sensitive crop found in the area, yet all crops including wheat can be susceptible to off target movement of herbicides. Herbicide drift can injure foliage, shoots, flowers and fruits. If injury is severe enough, or occurs repeatedly, it can cause reduced yield, poor fruit quality, and occasionally, vine death in grapes and similar problems in other sensitive crops.

For downy brome control in wheat, Powerflex and Olympus Flex are good choices, but some changes are in the works that growers should be aware of. Dow, the manufacturer of Powerflex, has submitted a proposal to EPA to increase plant back restrictions. One change that would affect local pulse growers is increasing the plant back interval to 10 months for peas, chickpeas and lentils. The restrictions are further qualified by the following parameters-if the soil pH is uniformly 6.0 or greater AND total rainfall (including irrigation) during the interval is greater than 16 inches. Yet, if the soil pH is less than 6.0 OR total rainfall (including irrigation) is less than 16 inches then the rotation interval is 18 months. These additional restrictions have not yet been approved, but it is anticipated that they will be adopted and added to the label soon.

Dan Ball, OSU Weed Scientist, recommends a full 3.5 oz rate for a spring application of Powerflex. It has good crop safety, and while he has noted some yellowing with Powerflex under cool application conditions but he hasn't seen this yellowing to affect yield.

Table 1. Alternative herbicides for wheat less likely to injure grapes.

Axial	Hoelon	Olympus
Buctril	Huskie	Olympus Flex
Discover	Linex	Paramount
diuron (Karmex)	Maverick	PowerFlex
Everest	metribuzin (Sencor)	Puma

If broadleaf weeds are a problem in the field, Huskie is a new broad spectrum herbicide, without the volatility issues of growth regulator herbicides such as 2,4-D and dicamba. Research has shown it to be effective against prickly lettuce and kochia, plus many others. Huskie should be ground applied at the 11 – 15 oz rate with a spray volume of 10 or more gallons per acre. Other herbicides are also available and a partial list can be seen in Table 1. If 2,4-D is used, the less volatile amine salt formulation is recommended.

Always take the necessary precautions to insure that drift does not occur, and follow label statements regarding environmental conditions at the time of application.