



MEDIA RELEASE
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Vineyard incident highlights importance of applicator training, spray research

The reported spray drift incident in Hawke's Bay has highlighted the importance of quality training programmes for all applicators and new research into minimising spray drift, said Agcarm chief executive Graeme Peters.

The Hawke's Bay Regional Council is investigating a complaint that drift from herbicide spray has affected two vineyards north of Napier.

"If spray drift is found to be responsible, this occurrence is unacceptable to Agcarm members who supply the products used by farmers and we extend our deepest sympathies to the growers concerned. We encourage the regional council to carry out a full investigation and, if appropriate, press charges against those responsible for allowing drift to occur," Mr Peters said.

"Keeping every droplet of spray within the paddock is almost impossible but there is no excuse for applicators to be spraying in conditions and in a manner which will cause spray drift to damage neighbouring properties or expose humans or the environment to harm."

All aerial and ground boom spray applicators should have completed GROWSAFE[®] training and have renewed their certificates every five years. Commercial applicators should be GROWSAFE[®]-registered chemical applicators. Furthermore, the HSNO Act requires applicators to have an Approved Handler Certificate that requires knowledge of best practice application, or be under the control of an Approved Handler.

A GROWSAFE[®]-registered ground applicator would know that minimising spray drift includes taking into account:

- spray pressure and its effect on droplet size;
- droplet size - smaller droplets are more likely to drift;
- formulation choice;
- use of drift control agents where appropriate;
- wind direction and speed;
- terrain;
- sprayer speed - the faster you travel the greater risk of drift from nozzle wind shear;
- sprayer boom height - distance from target;
- atmospheric conditions (such as avoiding spraying under local surface temperature

inversions).

Experienced aerial applicators would counter spray drift by using appropriate nozzles, boom length, and nozzle orientation, positive shut-off valves, and flying at heights below four metres.

If spray drift is found to have damaged the Hawke's Bay vineyards, it's highly likely that the applicator has not followed the practices which responsible farmers, growers, and contractors use every day all over the country to minimise the impact of sprays drifting to neighbouring properties.

The incident has also underscores the importance of continued research into the best way to spray.

The Foundation for Research Science and Technology is funding a six-year, \$5.4 million programme into reducing pesticide exposure to people and the environment through an improved understanding of the science behind spray formation, deposition and drift.

"The research led by world-renowned scientist Dr Andrew Hewitt of Lincoln Ventures Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Lincoln University, aims to reduce off-target movement of agrichemicals through developing widely available models for spray decision-support and drift management. Studies with drift reduction technologies are already underway and new models are showing us how to spray safely to protect crops while avoiding off-target drift," Mr Peters said.

Mr Peters said that, before spraying, applicators should always follow the four Cs.

- Communicate: Talk to your neighbours before you spray.
- Competency: Make sure you or your contractor are GROWSAFE®-trained. GROWSAFE® training teaches how to apply agricultural chemicals safely and accurately, in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Management of Agrichemicals.
- Calibrate: Test and calibrate equipment regularly. This is crucial to reducing spray drift.
- Climate: Weather conditions, especially wind speed and wind direction as well as atmospheric stability (e.g. avoiding temperature inversions under conditions of little or no wind) have a major influence on how much spray drift might occur and whether it becomes a problem.

Agcarm is the industry association of companies which manufacture, distribute and sell products that keep animals healthy and crops thriving. Member companies are committed to ensuring that these products are used safely, effectively and sustainably