



January 3, 2014

TARGET MET FOR THREE YEARS - ATRAZINE

There is good news from the corner of Saline, Jefferson and Gage County in a small watershed called Dry Creek. To Federal and State regulators, it's called Nebraska (04). This also has underlying implications for farmers in surrounding areas such as Thayer, Fillmore, Seward, York and Lancaster County. For the third year in a row, detailed surface water samples in the Dry Creek Watershed are well below the threshold for surface water quality with the herbicide Atrazine. Even with this success, we are still very much under the microscope and 2014 matters a great deal.

Atrazine is one of the most widely used agricultural pesticides in the U.S. It is applied before and after planting to control broadleaf and grassy weeds to corn and sorghum in Nebraska. The EPA has recently evaluated 150 studies investigating a wide array of effects potentially relevant to human health. Given the documented presence of Atrazine in certain drinking water sources in the Midwest and surface water bodies, the EPA has the use of Atrazine under review and uses an independent Scientific Advisory Panel or (SAP).

As a part of the review with surface water quality, the EPA required Atrazine registrants to implement an innovative, intensive ecological watershed monitoring program. The Nebraska team to solve the Dry Creek Watershed water quality issue consisted of farmers, commercial applicators, NE Corn Growers Association, NRD, UNL Extension, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, and Syngenta. Syngenta has recently refilled their compliance officer position by the name of Mark Miller. Mark has experience with the Missouri monitoring sites.

Because the EPA is studying the potential ban of atrazine use in select areas that have low infiltration rate soils (i.e. Gage, Jefferson, Saline), it could in a very real sense put farmers in our area at a disadvantage to others. The EPA has not acted on the study of stream effects and the possibility of imposing local or regional bans or other types of label changes.

Dry Creek is a stream that dries down to a trickle in the summer but that did not matter with the sampling program EPA initiated. We have done well to improve water quality, but the need to continue to do good is real. We need to use the lowest effective rates and follow setback guidelines to water bodies.

All practices which help reduce Atrazine escaping to surface water need to be in place, including: No-till farming, terraces, tile outlets with a grass buffer below around the outlet end or no-tilling around the inlet side, diversions, crop rotation, buffer strips, the use of Atrazine setbacks according to label, drift management, timing of use, don't apply to wet soils, don't apply when heavy rains are expected and good management with irrigation water applications to decrease runoff. All of these practices can add up considerably and have had an effect in the Dry Creek Watershed.

By label, no Atrazine application is allowed within 66 feet of points of runoff to rivers and streams or within 200 feet of lakes and reservoirs. Do not apply Atrazine within 66 feet of any



standpipe in a terraced field unless it is incorporated to a 2-3 inch depth or no-till farming is used with no residue removal around the inlet. Atrazine products can vary on this requirement so always read and follow the label. What we do collectively as a farm community in 2014 does matter.

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