BY KURT LAWTON
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# Resistant Weeds: Costly Denial

## Southern growers warn waterhemp may become the next Palmer pigweed.

Corn Belt farmers take heed. Southern weed scientists warn that those scattered patches of waterhemp in your glyphosate-resistant crops are a likely sign of expensive weed control to come, especially if all you apply is glyphosate.

During his visit to Indiana in August, Bob Scott saw waterhemp sticking up everywhere, as well as a giant ragweed. “If you think there’s not a weed-resistance problem developing with glyphosate, then you’re not paying attention,” says the University of Arkansas weed scientist. “Arkansas looked the same way four or five years ago, and everyone denied there was a problem. Now, if you see a pigweed, it is resistant [to glyphosate]. Waterhemp in the Midwest could be the next big resistant weed.”

Malcolm Haigwood, farmer and custom applicator from Newport, Ark., shows that if you miss spraying the 2-inch glyphosate-resistant Palmer pigweed, you wind up with 6-foot-tall pigweeds loaded with resistant seeds.
PHOTOS: KURT LAWTON

Scott has warned Arkansas growers about glyphosate-resistant Palmer Amaranth (pigweed) since before 2008, when the issue started to explode. Today, attempted control of that superweed now involves residual herbicides and multiple post applications that cost soybean growers $60 to $80 per acre, after years of spending only $12 to $15 on glyphosate applications.

**RESISTANCE DENIAL.**
As part of an August meeting at Dow AgroSciences headquarters in Indianapolis, we also traveled to Arkansas to view soybean fields overrun with Palmer pigweed and see evidence of their 100-year flood this spring. We talked to local farmers, applicators and weed scientists. Every one of them hammered home the fact that growers denied they had glyphosate-resistant pigweed, until it was too late.

Local Newport grower and custom applicator Malcolm Haigwood farms with two brothers. They couldn’t agree on spending more money on weed control because they didn’t think they had a problem. “When weeds escape, farmers tend to blame the application or the rate, ignoring the fact that weeds may be resistant,” he says.

Haigwood sprayed 65,000 acres this year for customers and gained a real sense for the value of application timing — given the flood and the crop restart with soybeans following drowned corn. “Weed-control timing is everything. We can only get good control of pigweed if we get rain to activate the residual herbicide. That buys us a couple weeks, then we can hopefully optimize our post control of 2-inch weeds. If we get weather or application delays, and they get 6 inches tall, we cannot control them.”

We headed back to Dow AgroSciences with a mind full of messy fields. The next day we saw a preview of the company’s new Enlist weed-control system at their show plots. This treatment will allow a new less volatile and low-drift 2,4-D formulated product plus glyphosate to be sprayed on top of 2,4-D-resistant crops, which will follow a soil-applied application of Sonic herbicide as the foundation. It is slated to receive registration in 2013 for corn, 2015 for soybeans and 2016 for cotton, according to Damon Palmer, who heads up the Enlist project for Dow AgroSciences.

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