

New Tool In Pigweed Battle

Three growers share their success stories against this dreaded foe.

By Amanda Huber



To say that Southern row-crop producers are desperate to find some way to combat Palmer amaranth, also known as pigweed, is not an exaggeration. When the only option in some cases is abandoning the field, growers finding a management tool that offers success against this adversary is the most welcome news in years.

Although rope-wick type applicators have been around for years and were often some device fashioned by the producer, the effectiveness against weed problems was marginal at best. But this season, several Southeast growers used the GrassWorks Weed Wiper and were pleased with the results.

Searching For An Answer

“With these Palmer amaranth,” says

Tim Vaughn, a producer from High Springs, Fla., “we were fighting a losing battle. The Weed Wiper is the only thing that we’ve been able to use with any luck at all.”

GrassWorks Weed Wiper, established in 2004, offers two main types: a three-point hitch or tractor-mounted cropping model and a pull-type, popular for use in pastures. Both types come in a variety of sizes, but can be built to match a producer’s specific needs. Each Weed Wiper includes a steel roller wetted by means of a 12-volt pump. The roller is covered with an absorbent, carpet-like material that ensures maximum chemical transfer to the weeds while preventing drips.

As the roller passes over the weeds, the touch of the plant releases herbicide from the absorbent cover. Larger plants exert



Tim Vaughn stands next to a field ready for combining, thanks to the Palmer amaranth control from the Weed Wiper.



(Left) Like many growers, Terry Herrell faced a daunting challenge of growing peanuts in pigweed-infested fields. (Above) Herrell demonstrates the Weed Wiper.

more pressure on the roller and, therefore, receive a proportionately greater dosage of herbicide. As the stem presses against the roller, some of the herbicide will run down the stem creating more coverage. When travel speed is correctly set, the rotating roller will not physically damage the weeds, allowing the herbi-

cide to move through the plant for a complete kill.

Vaughn says he went over his fields three times with the Weed Wiper.

“We’d get the ones that were up, and then more would come up and we’d go over it again. Usually the weeds were about a foot and a half above the peanuts

so you could wipe them easily.”

Stronger Formulation, Quicker Results

Vaughn used Roundup because, as he says, he wanted to see results quickly.

“We played around with different formulations, and I ended up going heavier than they recommended because I wanted quick results. I used about half and half, which made it strong, but I wanted to see it work quickly.”

Vaughn, who used the Weed Wiper on about 400 acres of peanuts, says it was easy to learn how to operate.

“The roller turns and you will tell when you are getting too much. We put a little dish soap in it which gives it a foamy, gray, hazy look on the roller. As the roller turns, you can tell how much you are getting on there and when you are getting too much.

“My Weed Wiper is 20 feet, and you can control or spray the right and the left 10 feet separately. That way, if you have a heavier infestation on the right side, you can put more chemical on that side, or the other way around,” he says. “The key is just keeping it good and damp.”

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Vaughn sums it up in saying, “If you have a Palmer amaranth problem like I do, it was worth every penny. We were considering having to abandon these fields; we just weren’t having any luck with controlling it.”

Satisfying Results On Large Weeds

Rodney Locke, from Dawson, Ga., was another producer looking for some way to control pigweed in his fields. He first saw the Weed Wiper in a magazine and ordered one, but it had not yet been delivered when the pigweed began to grow.

“Pigweed will grow a foot a week, and the majority were at least four to five feet tall when I was finally able to wick them,” Locke says. “It did a good job. We are winding up peanuts now and most all of the pigweeds are dead.”

Locke says his formula was 20 gallons of herbicide with five gallons of crop-oil concentrate and five gallons of water.

“It has to be able to run out onto the mop, but you don’t want to make it drip on the peanuts, either,” he says. “I would hit the sprayer two or three seconds every few minutes, and it would keep the mop wet, but not drip.”

Locke says he would have preferred to use the Weed Wiper as soon as the weeds were tall enough to put a sufficient amount of herbicide on them, but despite the delay, he was still well satisfied with the results.

Based on Locke’s specifications, his Weed Wiper was built to allow him to use it in cotton and soybeans, as well as peanuts. However, he says, in his cotton, the weeds were not tall enough to get the



This picture shows pigweed treated early on the left and, to the right, pigweed treated three weeks later.

Benefits of Using the GrassWorks Weed Wiper:

- Herbicide is applied only where needed
- Use less chemicals overall
- Eliminates drift issues
- Built to meet producers’ needs
- Multiple uses for crops, pastures
- Kept producers in fields by controlling pigweed

needed amount of herbicide on the plant to kill it.

Pays For Itself Quickly

Like Vaughn and Locke, an increasing problem with pigweed had Terry Herrell searching for a solution.

“Our pigweed problems really started last year and were sort of bad, but this year was just awful,” says Herrell, who farms 200 acres of peanuts in Terrell and Webster Counties in Georgia. “We researched wiping equipment and decided to go with the GrassWorks Weed Wiper.

“We like it really well. It seems to be a pretty good tool.”

Herrell says he was able to run four to five miles per hour, but says initially, he was getting the roller too saturated with herbicide.

“We got some splatter when the weeds would flip out of the machine. We know what we need to do now is back off on the saturation of the roller.”

Herrell says he ran it twice on his worst fields, and it killed the first crop of weeds nicely.

“When the peanuts reached canopy, we went back over it again, and the peanuts stayed fairly clean the rest of the time. The few pigweed out there are not a problem,” he says.

In addition to the pigweed, Herrell says it also killed beggarweed, sicklepod and Texas panicum on his Magnolia Point Farms. He also used the Weed Wiper in cotton, but says it was not as successful as in his peanuts.

“I can say it has helped us enough to pay for itself in one year. If we hadn’t had it, we would have had a big problem.”

The GrassWorks Weed Wiper has not been tested by peanut researchers for its overall effectiveness against Palmer amaranth or other weeds. Plus, no peanut herbicides are labeled for use in a rope-wick type applicator, except for glyphosate. However, these growers were all pleased with the control they achieved. In fact, their success garnered the attention of neighboring producers so much that each producer says as many as four to five neighbors borrowed their Weed Wiper for use on their farms. PG

