

Canopy common factor in highest grossing cotton crops

Two full seasons of commercial use and pre-registration trials of the Caltex Precision Spray Oil, Canopy, have proven its effectiveness in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in cotton crops, across the key cotton growing valleys of NSW and Queensland.

Goondiwindi-based cotton consultant, Patrick Jones, was one of first people to discover the unique fit of Canopy as an important tool in IPM and maximising crop returns.

He says secondary pest control now has a greater focus with the widespread adoption of Bollgard cotton which has shifted the focus from heliothis damage to sucking pests like aphids and mirids.

Patrick has had ample hands on experience with Canopy — being involved in pre-registration trials of the product with Dr Robert Mensah of the NSW DPI. The trials involved Canopy in combination with various 'soft' insecticides at various rates and also compared the product with another spray oil.

"Because the end-of-season spray is the most expensive one, it has a big impact on gross margin"

According to Patrick the preliminary trials and subsequent field experience with Canopy have proven its effectiveness in controlling target pests — while being 'soft' on beneficial species. This combination gave the most economical and environmentally sustainable insect control.

This season's registration of the product for the control of mirids (supplementing its existing registrations for aphids and Helicoverpa) further cements its role in spray programs for the 2006–07 season and confirms grower experience with the product from preceding seasons.

"I use Canopy with all my cotton growers. Once they start using the product in a tank mix they see the benefit compared to using insecticide alone," he said.

Patrick said the main benefit of Canopy was that it allowed softer insecticides to be used while slowing the occurrence of secondary pests throughout the growing season. "If one less spray is achieved because of less damage this means higher yields and a better bottom line at the end of the season."

This attribute was first observed in pre-registration trials of the product in 2003–04 where Canopy both out-yielded alternative insecticide treatments and also provided better gross margins as a result of reduced spray costs.

While the difference between the various insecticide treatments was hard to see to begin with, Patrick said the real difference came at the end of the season. "Everything needed an extra spray except the block that had [been sprayed with] Canopy. Because the end-of-season spray is the most expensive one, it has a big impact on gross margin," he said.

Patrick said the most effective way to use Canopy was as a tank mix to increase

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the efficacy of partner chemicals. Canopy also has insecticidal activity itself which is very useful when using some of the softer products especially when controlling mirids which have become a major pest.

“Canopy’s oil molecules help penetrate the leaf surface resulting in greater adhesion and less evaporation which increases the persistence of insecticides. It also changes the surface condition making the leaf unattractive for egg laying,” he said.

“It stands to reason that with less eggs being laid you end up with less pests, which together with more beneficial insects surviving throughout the season results in fewer sprays to achieve effective insect control.”

Patrick said benefits were maximised by using the right partner products to manage beneficial insect populations, tolerating some early season crop damage and having confidence in economic thresholds before spraying.

“Some growers are still coming to grips with some of the ‘soft’ sprays on the market which have had mixed results, both in terms of efficacy and effect on beneficial insects. But if you start flaring mites or other secondary pests by using the wrong product it gets expensive,” he said.

Since using Canopy in spray mixes



Caltex Crop Protection Territory Manager, Stuart Paterson and Goondiwindi consultant Patrick Jones take a break on the banks of the Macintyre River at Goondiwindi

Patrick said he hasn’t had to use a conventional aphid spray or harder chemical options. This keeps the whole IPM program in balance by preserving predatory insects.

“Once you’ve got insect pests under

control you can spend more time on water and nutrition,” he said.

Further information about Canopy is available from Stuart Paterson at Caltex on 0408 682 087.






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