

Chemical quality should be your priority

Supplied by 4Farmers

If you're not into risk taking with farm chemicals – chemical quality has to come first. If there is one subject coming under increasingly heavy scrutiny today, it is farm chemicals for three key reasons:

- The efficacy of the product in doing what the farmer wants it to do;
- The safety of the farmer in applying the chemical; and,
- The safety of consumers in the food chain.

It's for these reasons that farmers must give consideration to what they're applying and not just be governed by what appears to be the cheapest.

Senior chemist, Dr Roger Franklin, head of production at the 4Farmers operation in Welshpool, said that just on the subject of product efficacy – if the boom spray is blocking up or later in the season you find the product hasn't lived up to expectations, the fantastic bargain you thought you had wasn't a bargain after-all.

He says it's a tricky road that farmers are on when buying farm chemicals.

"On the one hand price has to be a consideration and on the other hand the product has to be reliable and safe to use," he said.

According to Roger in the past this had been a quandary for farmers with many believing that the only way to access a reliable product was to stick to products from the major multi-national companies and known tradenames.

He added that this was not true anymore.

"While these companies have set the standard in quality in the past, I can tell you after working for 30 years in the industry that there are some reliable generic brands that can give as good a performance, and in fact sometimes better."

Roger said that 4Farmers, an organisation established by local farmers because they were fed up with price gouging by the multi nationals at the time, has benchmarked its products against leading brands to make sure they perform to the same standard.

He added: "In quite a few cases we have actually exceeded the performance standards of the products we have been emulating.

"But there is more to it than just that, as aside from performance in the paddock, the health [and] safety of the people applying the chemicals and its effects on the environment have to be considered when reviewing formulations.

"I believe that farmers are taking a risk with some of the very cheap imported products that don't go through Australian laboratories before being released," he said.

"For health and environmental reasons some raw materials are being phased out. We are working out new formulations to eliminate these undesirable materials.

"The size of research budgets maybe bigger at the multi-nationals, but a company like 4Farmers is still doing its part in research and innovation.

"People need to understand that the active is just one part of the chemical formulations. What the other ingredients are and how they're put together makes a big difference to chemical performance and the applicator's safety."

4Farmers General Manager, Neil Mortimore said 4Farmers has manufactured most of its range of farm chemicals in WA for the past 10 years.

"It means we meet Australian health and safety standards and, by having the technical skills of chemists in our team, we're able to compare our products with those of the multi-nationals to ensure our products haven't sacrificed quality for the sake of being competitively priced.

"Farmers can be assured when dealing with 4Farmers that the products have been laboratory tested by a bright team of chemists and then field tested by competent agronomists before they're presented to them.

"We're a local company, owned by farmers and I can promise farmers that our products have been put together with integrity and care," Neil said.



There has been one topic coming under scrutiny recently and that is the quality of farm chemicals.