

TESTING OFFICERS PLAY PIVOTAL ROLE IN ACCU-SPREAD

WHEN CONTRACTORS HAVE ACCU-SPREAD ACCREDITATION, FARMERS CAN BE CONFIDENT THAT THEIR OPERATORS HAVE MET PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AND THEIR MACHINES ARE CERTIFIED TO SPREAD EVENLY AND ACCURATELY.

Fertiliser Australia programme manager Jeff Kraak says to have Accu-Spread accreditation, the operator of the spreader must have the Fertcare A certificate (which includes completing the product knowledge and spreading modules) and the spreading machine itself must be certified.

“For a machine to get Accu-Spread certification, a testing officer must confirm that it achieves no more than 15 percent coefficient of variation across the spread pattern for fertilisers, and 25 percent for products such as lime, gypsum and compost. The program does not set a minimum bout width for certification,” Jeff says.

“Testing officers play a very important role in the Accu-Spread programme. Not only do they test machines and verify their accuracy, they also have the knowledge and skills to help contractors optimise the performance of their machines.

“Testing officers can help fine tune spreaders. This could mean a contractor can increase their bout width while maintaining an accurate spread pattern.”

Russell Nichol is the longest-standing Accu-Spread testing officer. Based in Echuca, he has been in the fertiliser industry for more than 30 years.

Russell says he started in the industry with his family’s business Nichol Trading, before he moved into spread testing for the Australian Fertiliser Services Association (AFSA).

“I got involved in spread testing after our machines were having problems with striping. After countless hours modifying them and testing, we fixed the machines and reached accreditation.

“Since the mid-1990s, I have been the AFSA Accu-Spread tester when the program was first instigated. I have tested hundreds of fertiliser spreaders of all makes and models.”

Russell has been involved in AFSA at a local, state and national level and he has served as Victorian branch president and on the AFSA national council.

“I regularly run field days, demonstrating Accu-Spread and test machines in Victoria, NSW, South Australia and Western Australia.”

He says he can test virtually any spreader,



no matter how good or bad.

“We have come a long way since the days of cutting off the backend of a machine and re-building it to get it right. Nowadays, when people buy a new machine from a spreader manufacturer, it should test pretty close to the mark.

“People should have confidence that if they are investing in a new machine it spreads the way the spreader manufacturer or importer says it will.”

Russell reckons the main factors required to achieve a good spread pattern are having a good product and a good machine.

“If you have a good product and a good machine that has been correctly set up, you will achieve a good spread pattern. Take away one of these and you are going to struggle to get a good spread pattern.

“Machines also need to be clean and well maintained. You cannot expect a machine to spread well if gunk has built up on the back

AS WELL AS VERIFYING THE ACCURACY OF SPREADERS, ACCU-SPREAD TESTING OFFICERS CAN HELP OPTIMISE THEIR PERFORMANCE.

end or it has bent spinners.”

He concludes that professional spreading contractors should have their machines Accu-Spread certified so they can assure their customers that the job will be done right and efficiently.

They will save time and money and they know exactly what their machine is doing; they can adjust the spread to match the conditions and fertiliser quality. **AC**

RUSSELL NICHOL (RIGHT) SAYS TO ENSURE A GOOD SPREAD, YOU NEED A GOOD PRODUCT AND A GOOD MACHINE THAT HAS BEEN SET UP CORRECTLY.



LONG-SERVING ACCU-SPREAD TESTING OFFICER RUSSELL NICHOL.