



### REX'S PRACTICAL TIPS #15 2006

## Herbicides in Young Vineyards

*I am often asked to comment on the use of herbicides in young vineyards. These are necessary evils that we have to learn to use with care. Here's my thoughts on the three most commonly used herbicides.*

### Glyphosate

There's so many different brews and formulations available these days, it's hard to keep abreast of them. If you are going to use Glyphosate in the first year of planting, do so with great care.

You can't go past the versatility and economy of this herbicide, BUT it does kill young vines and even small amounts of drift will severely check a vineyard. I am even concerned that some of the rootstock difficulties that have been reported over the years such as Black foot and Black goo are actually secondary to stress events such as glyphosate drift.

In the first year low volume gear must only be used under dead calm conditions. Better still keep this gear out of young vineyards. The movement of machinery can cause eddies that carry drift onto green tissue.

The best nozzles I've seen yet are the Teejet Air Induction nozzles.

They produce coarse droplets that are evenly spread over the spray pattern.



### Buster

We use this stuff in the nursery. That should tell you something about it's safety around young vines. We are still very careful to avoid drift or direct deposition.

Yes you do need another mortgage every time you buy a can, but there are some tricks to making sure you get good mileage from it. We try to never use it under 18°C. It's a herbicide for warm weather when weeds are actively growing.

It also seems to be quite fussy about concentration. If the concentration drops too low it's pretty weak on the grasses. On the other hand, too much in the tank seems to give a quick burn off with equally quick regrowth. Use this according to instructions and it works well. **Never combine Buster with Glyphosate.** The dessicant effect is too rapid for translocation of the Glyphosate.

### Amitrole

The sustainable winegrowing people will be coming to see me. I love this stuff. By itself it's a fair to middling herbicide, but in combination with Glyphosate it's the bees knees.

**Now read carefully:** The label says not to use it until the vines are at least two years old. With great care and experimentation this product can be used in some young vineyards. Steer away from Amitrole on light porous soils as it may leach into the root zone. On my heavy clay soils of West Auckland I can use Amitrole around just planted vines with no ill effects. As a rule of thumb, the more clay and organic matter the safer this herbicide. In contrast to Buster, this herbicide works best under cool conditions. In combination with Glyphosate this makes it the perfect late winter, or early spring clean up spray. It's perfect for getting rid of those "old man" mallows that are resistant to straight Glyphosate, and these are the plants that provide years of seeds to keep the cycle going.

I don't like combinations of Amitrole and Buster as one is a cool weather herbicide and the other is best in warm weather.

### Summary

- No matter what herbicide you are using, avoid drift onto the vines.
- Buster is the only "safe" dessicant herbicide for young vineyards.
- Glyphosate can be used but low volume application techniques increase the risk dramatically.
- Amitrole greatly expands the spectrum of weeds controlled when used with Glyphosate. If on light soils, proceed with caution and use this chemical only on young vines when experience shows the soil type is suitable.

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*Snippet Here's one to watch. World famous wine critic Robert Parker is predicting that Malbec will be the next variety to rise to stardom. Apparently we can expect consumption to rise to a peak by around 2015.*



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