

Sprayer Winterization

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The expense of an air-blast sprayer is enough reason to maintain it and properly protect it from the weather and freezing temperatures. Proper care can allow equipment to last longer, reduce down time and save money in the long run.

Consider these points in getting your air-blast sprayer ready for winter: (Most of these points will apply to any type of sprayer, including back-packs.)

Rinse and flush the sprayer to remove all pesticides from the tank, pump and hoses. If there are several gallons, spray the rinsate out onto vegetated nursery roadways. Drain the remaining rinsate from the sprayer. Spray it with a back pack, also onto grassed nursery roadways. Replace drain plugs after it dries.

Be careful not to contaminate waterways, sinkholes or wells while doing this. Wear protective clothing when working on the sprayer, as you will come in contact with several different pesticides, and at varying concentrations.

Circulate oil or antifreeze to lubricate the pump. Refer to the operator's manual to find out what the manufacturer recommends. It is important to protect pumps from corrosion and to keep them from freezing.

Treat tractor 3-point hitch sprayers the same. Bring pumps and sprayers inside when possible. Sunlight deteriorates poly tanks, rubber hoses, tires, etc. If inside space is limited, do not cover sprayers or equipment with sheets of plastic, because moisture will condense under the plastic.

Protect metal surfaces after washing with a coat of wax or paint. Pay particular attention to cleaning the fan blades and vanes of the air-blast sprayer.

Follow the manufacturer's suggestions for winterizing the motor on engine-driven sprayers. Fully charge the batteries. If possible, remove the batteries and store in a warm place, keeping them fully charged throughout the winter.

Lubricate the sprayer before storing. Store brass nozzle tips in diesel fuel.

Block up the air-blast sprayer to take the weight off the tires. Reduce the tire air pressure by half. (If the sprayer is not placed on blocks, do not let any air out. Do not allow the tires to contact gasoline, diesel fuel or oil-soaked soil.

Check belts and hoses for signs of wear and replace if needed. As limited as time is in the fall, you will probably be even busier in February or March when the air-blast sprayer will be required for the dormant oil application.

Comm/Equip/Sprayer Winterization 11-97; rev 9-09

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