

**Smörgåsbord**



Harold Johnson  
Editor

"Lasso failure — are you next?" reads the big sign on Highway 65 where it passes Oscar Lee's farm just outside River Falls in western Wisconsin. Oscar put the sign up last fall after sustaining what he estimates to be an \$18,000 crop loss that occurred, he claims, due to "total failure of Lasso herbicide by Monsanto". He attributes the crop damage to "frozen Lasso".

"I bought 17 cans last May and used 15 of them before I began to think something might not be



right. The color and consistency of the chemical didn't look right," Oscar told FARM SHOW. "I kept two cans and bought new supplies to finish my fields. At that point, I let my dealer and Monsanto know that I thought I had a problem. As the season progressed, we found out that our fields were totally infested with foxtail and that we had no weed control in the areas where we'd used the original 15 cans."

Oscar's particularly upset because, he says, he'd made a point of asking his dealer for fresh chemical. Every can of Lasso carries a warning against freezing, which is what Oscar thinks happened somewhere along the line to his chemical. "Since I'd asked for fresh material, I didn't bother to check the cans for dates until I'd already applied 15 of the 17 cans. When I did check them, I discovered that they were all dated 1979."

At that time he began taking pictures of the 100-plus acres of weed-infested soybeans and, again, contacted both his dealer and Monsanto. Oscar says that once he realized the chemical would not be effective, he ran through the beans once with a rotary hoe and cultivated another time. Even so, last fall he was unable to harvest several fields, and only parts of others and estimates his total yield loss at \$18,000. He's in the process of filing a formal claim with Monsanto but says that his dealing with their field representative, and his local dealer, has been so unsatisfactory he put up his sign.

"They tried to get me to fill out a form asking how deep I'd plowed, how I had applied the chemical, what the weather conditions were at the time, and so on. I felt they were trying to get me to feel I was responsible for their mistake when, in fact, I've used Lasso successfully for years. The 50 acres of beans I treated with fresh Lasso last year, using the same procedures and rates I'd used on all my soybeans, turned out fine. So, I said I wouldn't

answer any questions until they told me what warehouse the chemical in question had been stored in, and if it had been frozen. They wouldn't tell me anything."

Oscar plans to push ahead with his efforts to be paid for his loss. Meanwhile, he has some advice for farmers using herbicides. "Never buy chemical that's not dated for the year you want to apply it. If you do get a bad batch, don't let company representatives intimidate you into thinking it was your mistake in application if you truly believe the chemical was defective.

"As for Lasso, it's a good product but, if it's been frozen, I wouldn't use it. The can label says you can shake it up to restore it but I don't believe it. If it looks reddish with crystals settled out, I'd sure check with the dealer to make doubly sure you aren't applying leftover Lasso that's been frozen."

FARM SHOW contacted Dr. Gary Jacques, Monsanto weed control specialist who works closely with Lasso. He says alachlor, the active ingredient in Lasso, can settle out as crystals at temperatures below 32°. "That's stated on every can and most farmers and dealers are aware of it. But as is also stated on the can, you can bring it back to full strength by shaking it intermittently for several days at room temperatures."

Jacques says that at temperatures just above freezing, in the upper 30's and lower 40's, the alachlor crystals might not re-suspend themselves when shaken. "But I've never seen a case, even in our 'worst use' simulation lab tests, where Lasso lost more than 10% of its effectiveness. If it's been frozen during the winter, normal handling during the spring shakes the can up enough to completely restore the chemical."

Jacques said he's not aware of any farmers in the 12 years Lasso has been on the market who've been compensated for yield losses connected with the use of frozen Lasso. His advice: "Shake the cans and, if you hear crystals in the liquid, the material has probably been frozen and you'll have to shake it still more."

As for checking the date, Jacques notes that "Lasso has a five-year shelf life so there's nothing unusual about getting a can dated 1 to 1½ years before. It can take that long to work through our distribution system," he explains. (Mark Newhall, Managing Editor).

**Dealership closings cost money** — Reports of farmers losing thousands of dollars because their local farm machinery dealer went bankrupt prompts this warning from the Iowa Attorney General's office: "Pay only on delivery. If the dealer won't accept that, don't do business with him. Never pay for anything until the product is delivered, even if there is a deadline for savings. Make only a down payment, or put the money in an escrow account until delivery."

In one case, a farmer bought a combine and paid for it before it was delivered to take advantage of special premiums and savings which the dealer was offering. A few days later, the dealership went out of business. The farmer's checks, totalling over \$50,000, have been cashed and returned. He has a cash receipt from the dealer and even a delivery receipt for the combine. However, the manufacturer won't release the combine because the dealer hasn't yet paid for it.

Another tip: Always check the serial number of the machine when you receive it to be sure it matches your receipts. If the purchase was financed, make sure payments are made out and sent directly to the finance company, not to the dealer. Also, don't rely on your banker to warn you of pending trouble with a dealer. The dealer may also be the banker's customer and you can't expect him to betray the trust of one customer to warn another.

**Your very own medfly** — One of the most popular topics in agriculture in 1981, and probably again in 1982, is the medfly (Mediterranean fruit fly). It brought the fresh fruit industry of the nation to its knees and has cost tens of millions of dollars to

eradicate. If you've wondered what the little critter looks like, we have the answer. A California firm is offering actual sterile medflies imbedded in clear plastic. The small cube comes with a clasp which you can affix to a necktie. They sell for \$6.00 ea. and are available from: FARM SHOW Followup, Ag-Ho Service Co., 306 North Alamo Drive, Vacaville, Cal. 95688.

**Alcohol-powered car** — Glenn Kiecker, secretary of the Minnesota Alcohol Fuels Association, is enthusiastic about alcohol fuels and, to prove it, he went all the way to Brazil to buy an alcohol-powered Ford Corcel, a car about the size of an American Ford Fairmont.

"The alcohol fuel movement isn't dead, it's



changing. A good example of that came recently when Texaco announced they were no longer going to sell gasohol in their stations across the country. Everyone assumed that decision was one more nail in the coffin of alcohol fuels but the truth is that Texaco plans to sell even more alcohol than before. But they're going to call it 'premium unleaded fuel with ethanol added' because consumers accept that name much better. Texaco is actually building their own 60 million gallon alcohol plant," Kiecker told FARM SHOW.

As for his Brazilian car, Kiecker has averaged 23 mpg so far with the mid-size wagon. He powers it with 160 to 180 proof alcohol. Although the engine has a small gasoline reservoir for cold morning starts, it was designed to run only on alcohol. Kiecker bought the car new for \$3,400 and spent \$2,200 to ship it to the U.S. from Brazil. The price was actually less than a comparable American car, he says, because labor costs are cheaper in Brazil. Also, the car doesn't have all the safety features found on American cars.

In the accompanying photo, Kiecker explains the workings of the car to former U.S. Congressman Don Fraser, now mayor of Minneapolis.

For more details, contact: Glenn Kiecker, Minnesota Alcohol Fuels Association, 5641 Newton Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn. 55419 (ph 612 922-2809).

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