

## Videotapes as an extension aid for weed control

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## SUMMARY

Videotapes are a useful means of recording weed problems and disseminating the results of successful weed control demonstrations. A videotape was made on the control of wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) in wheat, and is being used in an extension program for farmers and as resource material for student lectures.

The greatest impact is achieved when people can see for themselves differences between treatments, hence good demonstration plots are the most effective aid to any extension program on weed control.

However field demonstrations are costly to set up. They cater mainly for the district in which they are located, and are useful only for the one season. In addition partial failures caused by abnormal weather conditions, damage by stock and vermin, application errors or poor site selection, add to the cost of the exercise.

The results of such demonstrations are usually presented at field days. These events are generally held once, and their success is frequently measured by the number of people in attendance. Other factors such as newsworthiness of subject matter, weather conditions on the day, and the preceding publicity coverage are all important for success.

A videotape recording of a successful field demonstration, by providing a permanent pictorial record, is a more flexible means of disseminating information. Through repeat performances a videotape is able to reach a much wider audience, thus more meetings of fewer people can be organized. Such meetings generally allow more effective discussion.

This technique can also be used to provide the "before and after" situation, as well as the various stages in between. It also allows for inclusion or deletion of material, provided editing facilities are available.

Colour slides are a more common method of recording experimental results because they are less expensive and easier to present than videotapes. However in certain situations videotapes can be a useful adjunct to the use of photographic slides.

A colour videotape was made of a successful demonstration trial on control of wild radish in wheat. The aim was twofold, firstly, it was to record this demonstration for use in the early stages of the 1978 cropping season to spearhead a concerted extension program aimed at early control of wild radish. Secondly, it was to serve as a useful aid for student lectures.

The videotape received a favourable response when shown to second year agriculture students at the Riverina College of Advanced Education. Most of them agreed that the videotape highlighted the main result from the trial, viz. the importance of early spraying. The students felt that with farmer groups the novelty would enhance the impact.

The taping was done by the Educational Technology Unit at the Riverina College of Advanced Education. The replay equipment is also available at the College for students, or, for outlying districts, by arrangement with local schools. While colour replay equipment is not available at most schools at present, it is likely that more schools will be supplied with such equipment in the near future. Facilities are available at the College for editing black and white videotape, but colour tape has to be edited professionally. For this reason, adequate rehearsal prior to filming is necessary to limit the number of stop-start sequences.

The main cost involved is the equipment for taping. We were fortunate enough to have a unit available and hence the only cost was that of the tape (colour cassette \$23; black and white tape \$11.40), and the time spent filming.

Colour videotapes have several advantages over those recorded in black and white. In weed control, colour is particularly useful for species identification. In this trial, the advantages of early post-emergence control of wild radish, compared with control using 2,4-D or MCPA at a later stage when the crop had tillered, was particularly obvious. The healthy, green plants contrasted well with the yellow, stunted plants that resulted from the longer period of competition. The colour videotape can be presented through black and white facilities. The reverse is not possible.

Videotapes are now commonly used as an audiovisual aid in most schools and tertiary institutions. From our experience they are a particularly valuable medium for showing the importance of weeds and how they can be successfully controlled.