

'GROWSAFE'

The National Voluntary Code of Practice for Aerial Topdressing Last Revised: 2002



Introduction

This Code of Practice was developed following topdressing sector meetings held at Armidale, NSW, 31 January 2001 and 31 January 2002, and wide consultation with industry members. This Code was formally adopted by members of the Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia at the Association's Annual General Meeting held on 19 June 2002.

This Code of Practice has been adopted by the Aerial Agricultural Association as a means of promoting the professionalism of the aerial topdressing industry and high standard of application. This is a voluntary Code of Practice to which individual aerial operators must commit themselves and their businesses and operations in writing to the AAAA.

Mission

Our mission is to ensure aerial topdressing is a sustainable industry that meets its environmental responsibilities and provides a reliable and efficient service for farmers, based on the professionalism of pilots and operators, well maintained equipment and the pursuit of industry best practice.

Shared Responsibility

The professional application of a high quality fertilizer or related product is dependent on a successful teamwork approach and shared responsibility that includes the effective discharge of a range of responsibilities by a number of people or sectors including:

- fertilizer manufacturers
- carriers
- fertilizer agents
- farmers
- applicators

The aerial agricultural industry is committed to the principle of due diligence, whereby operators, loaders and pilots will carry out to those things within their control to the best of their ability and to the current accepted best practice of the aerial agricultural sector.

However, the aerial agricultural industry is highly dependent on inputs from a range of other players in the industry to ensure the quality of applications.

For example, a breakdown in the transport quality or site preparation can lead to fertiliser being dumped on unprepared sites. This can lead to sticks and other contaminants in the product blocking the aircraft spreader doors, leading to jamming and misapplication, despite the best endeavours of the pilot.

Fertiliser application is a team effort and a breakdown in one part of the team can have significant impacts on another part of the team.

Transport and Handling

While transport of the fertilizer or other product is not the responsibility of the applicator, it is essential that the quality of the product is assured throughout the chain from production to application.

Quality assurance is critical in terms of the transport and dumping of the product not introducing contaminants which would in turn create a hazard for the applicator, such as sticks at the dump site that can jam aircraft spreader gates open.

Carriers involved in the transport of the product and particularly its delivery to the air strip dump site should ensure the following:

- Product will be delivered on site in a clean state
- Product will be delivered onto a site that is dry and clear of possible contamination from ground litter or stock.
- If the dump site is not up to the agreed standard, the carrier will not deliver the product.

The farmer or their agent should ensure that:

- The product dump will be clearly marked for delivery of the product
- The carrier will receive clear instructions for delivery, including an indicative map
- The farmer or a representative will be on site for delivery of the product to ensure its correct placement and its quality.
- The dump site will be clear of potential contaminants including sticks and vegetation
- The dump site will have easy access for loaders, and will be situated at a suitable spot for aircraft maneuvering

- The dump site will be constructed taking into account environmental considerations including potential run-off.
- Once dumped, the product will be covered with suitable tarpaulins and tyres or equivalent to ensure the product is not affected by moisture.

Air Strips

- Farmers will liaise with their aerial applicator to ensure air strips meet necessary requirements for the safe operation of the aircraft, including:
 - obstacle clearance
 - cleared area from centreline
 - no tyres
 - length
 - gradient
 - surface condition, including length of grass and smoothness
- Farmers will use as a guide the AAAA endorsed information sheet on strip preparation.
- All strips will be inspected prior to use by the client and their condition accurately reported to the applicator prior to arrival.
- Chief Pilots of aerial applicators will have the right to not operate off strips which they judge to be unsafe.

Farmer Liaison

- Applicators will meet or talk with farmers or their agents before each application to:
 - confirm the target area
 - confirm the product and rate
 - identify hazards (wires etc)
 - identify environmental hazards
 - identify any other issues that may impinge on the safety of the operation
- The applicator will provide clients (or their agents) with a treatment order form that must be completed and faxed back before an application can take place. The form will include:
 - product
 - rate
 - total tonnage/hectares
 - terms and conditions
 - map of treatment area, both schematic and topographic
 - client trading name and signature
 - strip condition (mown etc)
 - hazards
- The client will be asked to indicate on the treatment order form if:
 - neighbours have been notified of application
 - if they have any objections.

Mapping

- The client will be encouraged to provide the applicator with detailed maps of the treatment area, including hazards, waterways and any other areas not to be treated.
- The operators will maintain a client file for each client that will include:
 - the last previously used map that will indicate the last time it was updated
 - reference to paddock names or codes for the property

Application

- The applicator will undertake a risk assessment of each job to mitigate any potential environmental impacts of the treatment.
- The applicator will endeavor to ensure the treatment is contained within the target area at all times.
- The applicator will endeavor not to apply product into sensitive areas identified through the pre-application planning process.
- The applicator will plan the application taking into account the following:
 - weather conditions at the treatment area, especially wind
 - any recent rain that may still be causing run-off
 - use of buffer zones along identified waterways, buildings etc
 - terrain

Record Keeping

- The applicator will keep a record of the application including:
 - rate
 - product
 - date/time
 - site
 - aircraft
 - pilot
 - significant notes

Support Equipment

- In order to prevent weed transfer, support equipment (such as loaders) will only travel to and from the property airstrip by the most direct route, or internal access roads.

Aircraft

- Aircraft will be purpose built for agricultural operations.
- Aircraft will be calibrated to ensure accurate distribution of product.

- Aircraft will include a way of checking the positive closure of the hopper gate (such as a wing mounted mirror).
- Operators will work towards the use of GPS technology as resources permit.

Operators, Pilots and support staff

- All operators will be duly licensed by CASA for agricultural operations and all pilots will hold at least a commercial pilots licence and an agricultural rating.
- Ground support staff will be duly licenced by the appropriate authorities.
- Operators will encourage pilots to participate in industry safety and education programs.



For further information on the Aerial Topdressing Code of Practice or any other AAAA programs, please contact the AAAA office on (02) 6241 2100

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