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DROP SPREADER

A drop spreader has the advantage of applying a fairly exact pattern since this is limited to the distance between the wheels. This also allows a "tight" pattern (line) to be cut but requires that each pass meets exactly with the previous one or skips will be noticeable. Wide (> 6 feet) drop spreaders can become cumbersome in the landscape by limiting access around trees and shrubs and getting through gates. The agitator in the bottom of the drop spreader's hopper also may break the coating of some slow-release fertilizers.

CALIBRATING A DROP-TYPE (GRAVITY) SPREADER

Follow these steps, in order, to calibrate your drop-type (gravity) spreader.

1. Check the spreader to make certain all the parts are functioning properly.
2. Mark off an area which when multiplied by the width of the spreader will give 100 square feet of area. For example, the length required for a 1 1/2-, 2-, and 3-foot spreader is 66 2/3, 50, and 33 1/3 feet respectively.
3. Fill the spreader with the material you wish to apply (fertilizer, seed, herbicide, lime, other). Fill the hopper only to the level you will have when the material will actually be applied.
4. Make several trial runs over the area and practice opening the spreader as you cross the starting line and closing it at the finish line. Opening the spreader before it is in motion will result in non-uniform distribution. Walk at a pace which will be used when actually applying the material. Open and close the spreader gradually, not in a fast, jerky motion.
5. The weight of the material applied by the spreader must be determined. It can be swept up from a hard surface or caught on a large piece of paper or plastic. The easiest method is to attach a catch pan (cardboard works nicely) under the spreader openings and catch the material in the catch pan during the test run to determine how much was applied.
6. Begin calibration at the lowest setting and proceed at progressively higher settings (larger openings). The more trials at a given setting, the better will be the average rate of application. Usually three trials at a given setting are enough to obtain a reliable application rate. Weigh the material and record the information on each trial run for future use.
7. One of the calibrated settings will approximate the correct rate of material. *Example:* You want to calibrate a spreader to apply 1 pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet using a 10-10-10 fertilizer. This calculates to 10 pounds of fertilizer per 1000 square feet since the material is 10% nitrogen (10% x 10 pounds = 1 pound nitrogen). Since the area for calibration trials is only 100 square feet, apply one-tenth of 10 pounds or one pound of fertilizer per 100 square feet. If the desired application rate was 0.5 pound of nitrogen (5 pounds of material per 1000 square feet or 0.5 pound per 100 square feet) a setting of 7 should be used. Careful calibration is suggested for

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the complete spreader range. Settings are not necessarily linear, therefore, half of a particular application rate may not necessarily be obtained by using a setting number half the original.

8. The same calibration procedure is used for any material you want to apply. Since the quantity applied depends upon the physical properties of the material, the same settings cannot be used for different materials, even if the ratios are the same. Once the spreader is calibrated and set for the proper rate, any size area can be treated accurately.