Orchard Tech
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Weed spraying on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical weed spraying work and conditions. Your actual duties depend on the farm and what you are trained and authorised to do. Reading this sheet does not authorise you to handle or spray chemicals, drive a farm vehicle, operate machinery or repair equipment.

Who you work for

Orchard Tech is your employer. Your host farm (your host) directs your daily work. Both are responsible for your health and safety. Raise questions or safety concerns with your supervisor or Orchard Tech: Hari Yellina, 0439 32 32 32, or Soana Fanua, 0400 174 471.

Your working hours

Your confirmed roster sets your days, hours and breaks. Some shifts may be at night. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Weed spraying. You may spray herbicide (a chemical that kills weeds) to control weeds in the orchard, such as along the tree rows. Your host will train you on its spray equipment. This may be fitted to a tractor or a farm vehicle such as a Mule, and may have a hand wand (a hand-held spray nozzle on a hose).

This is specialist chemical work. Do it only if it is part of your confirmed job and your host has trained, assessed and authorised you for the chemical work, the tractor or vehicle, and the spray unit. You also need any licence or qualification the work requires. A licence alone does not show you can do the work safely.

Use only what your host gives you. Use only the products, amounts, equipment and method in your host's instructions. Do not guess and do not change anything. Follow the label, the safety data sheet (SDS) and your host's instructions. The SDS is a document that explains a product's dangers and how to use it safely. If anything is unclear or missing, stop and ask your supervisor.

Your host will train you in its own procedure. The work may include:

- **Filling and mixing:** filling the spray unit and adding chemical only at the filling point your host shows you, as you were trained, wearing the PPE your host tells you to wear.
- **Spraying:** spraying only where your host tells you, and watching for drip lines and other irrigation equipment in the rows.
- **After spraying:** emptying, flushing and checking the spray unit as your host trains you. Report faults. Fill in any records your host asks for.

This sheet covers weed spraying only. Spraying the trees, fertigation, repairs, jump-starting, electrical work, working at heights, climbing onto a spray tank, and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation.

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Handling herbicide and other chemicals

Herbicide and other chemicals can harm you if they get in your eyes or on your skin, or if you breathe them in or swallow them.

- **Before you start,** go through the label and SDS with your supervisor. Make sure you know where the eyewash, emergency shower, washing water and first aid are. If they are missing or do not work, tell your supervisor before you start.
- **Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) your host provides.** The label, the SDS and your host tell you what to wear. For chemical work this may include long chemical gloves, face and eye protection, a chemical suit and a chemical breathing mask. Your host will check that your PPE fits correctly.
- **Do not eat, drink or smoke** while you handle or spray chemicals. Wash your hands and any exposed skin after handling, and before you eat, drink or smoke.
- **Splashes or other exposure:** if herbicide or other chemicals get in your eyes or on your skin, or you breathe them in or swallow them, stop and get first aid straight away. Follow the first-aid instructions from your induction, the label and the SDS. Tell your supervisor straight away, even if you feel well. Also tell your supervisor if you or a co-worker feel unwell after spraying or handling chemicals.
- **Spills and leaks:** if chemical spills, or a hose or connection leaks or breaks, stop work, keep other people away and tell your supervisor. Clean up only as your host has trained you.
- **Storage, leftovers and cleaning up:** keep chemicals only in the containers and places your host shows you. Deal with leftover spray, washing water and empty containers only as your host tells you. Clean and store your PPE as your host shows you.

Spray drift, bees and other people

- **Weather and spray drift:** before you start, check the weather now and the forecast with your supervisor. Wind can carry spray away from where you aim it, towards people, bees, other plants or water. This is called spray drift. Follow the label and your host's instructions about the weather. If the wind changes, or spray drifts towards people, bee hives, other blocks or water, stop spraying and tell your supervisor. Your host will tell you where bee hives are. Stay away from them at all times.
- **Other people:** keep watching for other workers near where you spray. If someone comes close, stop spraying until they are clear. Never point the spray at anyone.
- **Going back into a sprayed block:** follow the label's instructions about when people may enter and what PPE is needed. Your host will explain these instructions and how sprayed blocks are signed.

Driving the tractor or vehicle safely

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the tractor or vehicle, the spray unit, your licence and the route are approved.
- **Before driving:** do the pre-start checks you were taught on the tractor or vehicle and the spray unit. Report faults. Never use unsafe equipment: tag it out as your host shows you and tell your supervisor. Use three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet) to get on and off. Never get on or off while it is moving.

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- **Roll-overs:** tractors and side-by-side vehicles can roll over, especially on slopes and banks, on rough or wet ground, near dams and channels, and with heavy loads. A tank of liquid can make them less stable. The liquid can move suddenly in a part-full tank when you turn or brake. The roll-over frame protects you only if you wear your seat belt.
- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time the tractor or vehicle moves. If the tractor has a cab, close its doors and windows before it moves. In a Mule, also wear the helmet and eye protection your host provides, keep doors or nets closed and keep arms and legs inside. Carry a passenger only if your host allows it and there is a passenger seat and seat belt approved by the maker. Never let anyone ride in a tray or on the spray unit or tank.
- **PTO shafts:** if the spray unit is driven by a PTO (power take-off, a turning shaft at the back of the tractor), check that its guards are in place and in good order. A turning shaft can catch clothing, hair or a hand and pull a person in. This can cause very serious injury or death. Never use a PTO with a missing or damaged guard: report it. Keep loose clothing, cords, jewellery and long hair away, and keep yourself and others clear while it turns.
- **Blockages and faults:** if a nozzle blocks or the spray unit has a fault, stop and tell your supervisor. Before anyone goes near, the tractor or vehicle and the spray unit must be shut down and made safe, using your host's procedure. Clear a blockage only if you are trained and authorised, and wear your chemical PPE.
- **Leaving the seat and parking:** every time before you leave the seat, follow the safe-stop procedure your host teaches you for that tractor or vehicle and spray unit. Park where your host shows you, on firm, level ground. Remove the key and return it as your host requires.
- **Before you move:** tell nearby workers you are about to move, and wait until they are clear. The driver cannot see some places around a tractor or vehicle (blind spots). Look in all directions and use your mirrors. If you cannot see that the way is clear, stop and ask for help.
- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use set routes, main tracks and headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows). Use the radio calls your host teaches you, and do not enter a headland until you get the reply your host's procedure requires. Obey signs and speed limits, and slow down for people, dust, poor visibility and rough ground. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **Power lines:** look up for overhead power lines, especially before you raise or fold any part of the spray unit. Ask your host where the power lines are. If your tractor, vehicle or spray unit touches a power line, or electricity jumps to it, stay in the tractor or vehicle. Call 000 or ask someone to call, and warn others to keep away. Get out only if fire or another life-threatening danger forces you to. Your host will show you how to get out safely in an emergency.
- **When you are on foot:** use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. If another machine comes into your work area, stop work, keep clear and tell your supervisor. Never approach a working machine until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.
- **Noise, lifting and tiredness:** tractors and spray units can be loud: wear the hearing protection your host provides. You may lift chemical containers, buckets and hoses. Lift only what is comfortable, and ask for help if a lift feels unsafe. Report pain early. If you feel too tired or unwell to work safely, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.

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Weather and the outdoors

Most work is outdoors in heat, cold, wind, rain and dust. Watch for holes, pipes, slippery ground and snakes. Work may change or stop in heat, storms or smoke: follow your host's instructions. Use sun protection all year (broad-brim hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, sunscreen), drink water often, take shade breaks and dress for the weather. Tell your supervisor straight away if you or a co-worker feel sick, dizzy or very hot.

- **Chemical PPE can make you hotter.** Use your breaks and drink water often.
- **Do not enter a block that someone else is spraying.** Follow no-entry signs and the label's entry restrictions. Your host will explain access arrangements for your authorised spraying task. **Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.
- **At night,** follow your host's instructions for lighting. If you cannot see your work area, other people or a label clearly, stop spraying, move to a safe place and tell your supervisor.

PPE and help on the farm

Your host will provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) for your tasks and show you how to wear, check and look after it. This may include safety boots, high-visibility clothing, gloves, eye or hearing protection, sun protection, a vehicle helmet and chemical PPE. Report missing, damaged or poorly fitting PPE before you start. PPE does not replace training, instructions or other safety controls.

At induction, learn who your supervisor is, where water, toilets and first aid are, the emergency plan, how to get help where there is no phone coverage, and the check-in arrangements when you work alone.

- In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000), then tell your supervisor. If you see a snake, keep clear and never try to catch or kill it. If a snake bites you, or you think you have been bitten, keep as still as possible and call 000 or ask someone to call.
- Report every injury, near miss or unsafe situation to your supervisor and Orchard Tech as soon as possible, even if it seems small.
- Ask for a demonstration, an explanation or language help whenever you do not understand.

Important note before starting any job

This sheet describes typical weed spraying work. Before you start, your host will give you the job description and safe work instructions for your actual duties, the PPE you need, a farm induction and training for your tasks. Follow those instructions. Do not do any work without the required PPE, training and authorisation. Complete the induction at every new farm, and get the instructions and training for every new task. **If anything is missing, unsafe or unclear, stop and ask your supervisor. You can also contact Orchard Tech.**