

Lime spreading on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical lime spreading 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 operate a tractor, spreader or loading machine, handle lime 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. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Lime spreading. Lime is spread on the soil to change how acid the soil is (its pH), improve the soil and give the trees calcium. You may drive a tractor with a lime spreader (a machine that spreads lime over the ground). Your host will tell you which tractor and spreader to use and where to spread.

Only if you are trained and authorised. Operate a tractor and spreader only after your host has trained you, checked that you can operate them safely and authorised you. You also need any licence or qualification the work requires. A licence alone does not show you can operate safely. Get training for each new tractor or spreader.

Use only what your host gives you. Use only the product, spreader settings, areas 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 explains a product's dangers and how to use it safely.

This sheet covers lime spreading only. Loading lime with a machine, such as a telehandler or loader, is a separate task. So are fertigation and fertiliser mixing, spraying chemicals, cleaning with compressed air or a pressure washer, repairs and adjustments, jump-starting a flat battery, electrical work, working at heights, and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels. Each needs its own instructions, training and authorisation.

Lime dust and your health

Lime can produce dust. The dust can irritate your eyes and skin, and your nose and throat if you breathe it in. Some lime products are more harmful than others. The label and SDS tell you the dangers of the product you use.

- **Before you start**, go through the label and SDS with your supervisor. Ask for language help if you need it. Make sure you know where the eyewash, washing water and first aid are.

- **Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) your host provides.** The label, the SDS and your host tell you what to wear. For lime this may include eye protection, gloves, long sleeves and a dust mask. Keep the cab doors and windows shut while you spread. On foot, keep out of lime dust as much as you can.
- **Do not eat, drink or smoke** while you handle lime. Wash your hands and any exposed skin after handling lime, and before you eat, drink or smoke.
- **If lime gets in your eyes or on your skin,** or you breathe it in or swallow it, 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.
- **Wind:** wind can blow lime dust onto people or into places where it should not go. Follow your host's instructions about wind. If dust blows towards people or out of the area you are spreading, stop spreading and tell your supervisor.
- **Spills and cleaning:** if lime spills, keep other people away and tell your supervisor. Clean up spills, and clean the spreader, only as your host has trained you.

The spreader, the PTO and loading

Some spreaders are driven by the PTO (power take-off). This is a shaft at the back of the tractor that turns to power the spreader. Some spreaders also have spinners (spinning discs that throw the lime out) and other moving parts.

- **PTO shafts:** a turning PTO shaft can catch clothing, hair or a hand and pull a person in. This can cause very serious injury or death. Check that the PTO guards are in place and in good order. Never use a PTO with a missing or damaged guard: report it. Do not wear loose clothing, cords or jewellery, and tie back long hair. Keep yourself and others clear while the PTO is turning.
- **Spinners and moving parts:** spinners throw lime out from the spreader. Keep people away from the tractor and spreader while they move or operate. If anyone comes close, stop the tractor and spreader safely and wait until they are clear. Never reach into the hopper (the bin that holds the lime) or near the spinners while anything can move. Do not climb onto the spreader or into the hopper.
- **Blockages and loose guards:** if lime blocks the spreader or a guard comes loose, stop and tell your supervisor. Before anyone goes near, the tractor and spreader must be shut down and made safe so they cannot start or move, using your host's procedure. Wait until all moving parts have stopped. Clear a blockage only if you are trained and authorised. Never restart with a loose or missing guard.
- **Hitching:** your host will show you how to connect (hitch) the spreader to the tractor. Make sure everyone is clear before you reverse to it. Never let anyone stand between the tractor and the spreader unless the tractor is stopped, the handbrake is on and the engine is off.
- **Loading the spreader:** your host will tell you how the spreader is filled and how to make it safe before loading. Machine loading is a separate task. Do it only if your host has trained you, checked that you can do it safely and authorised you for that machine. If someone else loads the spreader, wait where your host tells you, clear of the loading machine. Never stand under a raised load.

Driving the tractor safely

- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the tractor, the spreader, your licence and the route are approved.
- **Before driving:** do the pre-start checks you were taught on the tractor and spreader, such as the roll-over frame, seat belt, brakes, guards and radio. Check that the spreader suits the tractor and is correctly fitted and secure. If a fault could make them unsafe, do not use them. Tag them out as your host shows you and tell your supervisor.
- **Getting on and off:** use three points of contact (two hands and one foot, or one hand and two feet). Never get on or off a moving tractor. Start the tractor only from the driver's seat, and never bypass a safety switch.
- **Roll-overs:** tractors can roll over, especially on slopes and banks, on rough or wet ground, near dams and channels, and with heavy loads. A full spreader is heavy and can make the tractor less stable. The roll-over frame (ROPS) protects you only if you wear your seat belt. Some frames fold down for work under trees. A folded frame cannot protect you. Fold it down only when your host allows, and put it back up as soon as there is enough room.
- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time you operate the tractor. Carry a passenger only if your host allows it and the tractor has a passenger seat and seat belt approved by the tractor manufacturer. The passenger must wear the seat belt. Never let anyone ride on the spreader or a trailer.
- **Leaving the seat and parking:** your host will teach you the safe-stop procedure for the tractor and spreader. It covers the handbrake, the PTO, turning off the engine and making any raised equipment safe. Follow it every time before you leave the seat. When you finish, park on firm, level ground where your host shows you. Remove the key and return it as your host requires.
- **Noise and tiredness:** tractors and spreaders can be loud. Wear the hearing protection your host provides, as you are instructed. Use your breaks and report pain or discomfort early. If you feel too tired or unwell to operate safely, stop in a safe place and tell your supervisor.

People, other machines and power lines

- **Before you move:** tell nearby workers and wait until they are clear. A tractor and spreader have blind spots (places the driver cannot see). 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:** learn who is working in which blocks. Use set routes, main tracks and headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows). Obey signs and speed limits, and slow down for turns, people, dust, poor visibility and rough ground. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **Headlands and radio:** take extra care when you enter or leave tree rows and headlands. Your host will teach you the radio calls and replies needed before you enter a headland. Do not enter until you get the reply your host's procedure requires.
- **Seeing clearly:** keep the windows clean. If lime dust, low sun or poor light stops you seeing that the way is clear, stop in a safe place. Stop in a safe place before you use a phone.

- **Power lines:** look up for overhead power lines, especially where the spreader is loaded and when you raise equipment. Ask your host where they are. Electricity can jump to a machine near a line, even if it does not touch it. If your tractor or spreader touches a power line, or electricity jumps to it, stay in the tractor. 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. Never approach a working machine until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.

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.

- **Do not enter a block that is being sprayed or has a no-entry sign. Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.

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 and a dust mask. 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 lime spreading 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.**