

Spot spraying from a Mule with a hand wand on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical work and conditions for spot spraying from a Mule with a hand wand. 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 Mule or any other farm vehicle, operate other 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

Spot spraying means spraying chemical only on the spots or small areas your host tells you. You spray with a hand wand (a hand-held spray gun on a hose) from a Mule that carries a spray unit. A Mule is a side-by-side utility vehicle, such as a Kawasaki MULE: a small farm vehicle with seats side by side and a tray at the back.

This is specialist chemical work. Do it only if it is part of your confirmed job, your host has trained you and authorised you to do it, and you have any licence or qualification the work requires. Drive the Mule only after your host has trained you, assessed you and authorised you to drive that vehicle. A licence alone does not show you can drive it 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.

Separate tasks. This sheet covers spot spraying from a Mule with a hand wand only. Other spraying work, fertigation, towing, jump-starting, washing down the Mule, maintenance, repairs, electrical work, working at heights, and entering confined spaces, dams, tanks or channels are separate tasks. Each needs its own instructions, training and authorisation.

Before you start

- **Weather:** check the weather and the forecast with your supervisor. Spray only when your supervisor confirms that the weather is suitable and safe.
- **Before driving and spraying:** do the pre-start checks you were taught on the Mule and the spray unit, such as brakes, steering, lights, seat belts, the roll-over frame, hoses and the wand. Report faults. Never use unsafe equipment. If a fault could make the Mule or the spray unit unsafe, tag it out as your host shows you and tell your supervisor. If you raise the tray to check the engine, secure it with the tray bracket first.
- **Signing out:** before you leave, tell your supervisor where you are going and when you expect to return. Follow your host's sign-out and check-in arrangements, and make sure you can call for help.
- **Beehives:** your host will tell you where beehives are. Stay away from them at all times.
- **Fit to drive:** never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Tell your supervisor if you feel unwell or very tired, or a medicine makes you sleepy.
- **Public roads:** never drive on or across a public road unless your host has confirmed that the vehicle, your licence and the route are approved.

Handling and spraying chemicals

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. Ask for language help if you need it. Find the emergency shower and hand-washing water at the fill point. Also know where the eyewash and first aid are. If they are missing or do not work, do not start: tell your supervisor.
- **Wear the personal protective equipment (PPE) your host provides.** The label, the SDS and your host tell you what to wear. For spraying this may include long chemical gloves, face and eye protection, a chemical suit and a chemical breathing mask, with a hat, boots, a long-sleeved shirt and long trousers.
- **Filling the spray unit:** fill it and add chemical **only** at the fill point, as your host shows you. Lift only what you can lift comfortably. If a lift feels unsafe, ask for help.
- **Do not eat, drink or smoke** while you handle or spray chemicals. Wash your hands and any exposed skin after spraying, and before you eat, drink or smoke.
- **While you spray:** spray only where your host tells you. If you drive while you spray, drive very slowly, as your host shows you. Keep watching for other workers nearby. If someone comes close, stop spraying until they are clear. Follow your host's instructions for no-entry signs and for keeping people out of the areas you spray. Take extra care near equipment and structures in the rows.
- **Using the wand from the Mule:** your host must show you how to use the wand while you stay seated with your seat belt on, doors or nets closed, and arms and legs inside. If you cannot do this, or cannot keep safe control of the Mule, do not spray: stop and ask your supervisor. Never point the wand at yourself or anyone else. Never stand up or ride in the tray to spray.
- **Spray drift:** wind can carry spray away from where you aim it, onto people, water or places it should not go. If the weather changes or you see spray drifting, stop spraying and tell your supervisor.

- **Hoses and wand under pressure:** the hose and wand are under pressure during use and can stay under pressure after the spray unit is switched off. Watch all hoses and connections for leaks or breaks. If you find one, stop spraying and tell your supervisor. Never disconnect a hose or fitting under pressure.
- **Splashes or other exposure:** if 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 handling or spraying chemicals.
- **Spills and leaks:** if chemical spills or leaks, stop work, keep other people away and tell your supervisor. Clean up only as your host has trained you.
- **Cleaning up:** empty and flush the spray unit only where and how your host shows you. Take off, clean and store your PPE the way your host shows you. Follow your host's instructions for clothing or equipment that may have chemical on it. Keep chemicals only in the containers and places your host shows you.
- **At night,** follow your host's instructions for lighting. If you cannot see your work area and the people near you, or read a label clearly, stop work, move to a safe place and tell your supervisor.

Driving the Mule safely

- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time, and the helmet and eye protection your host provides (your host will tell you what to wear). Keep doors or nets closed and arms and legs inside. Sit only in a seat with a seat belt. Never ride in the tray or bypass a safety device.
- **Loads and roll-overs:** stay within the load limits and tie loads down. The spray unit and the liquid in it count towards the load limit. Liquid moving in the tank can make the Mule unstable. Side-by-sides can roll over even at low speed, especially on slopes, banks, sharp turns or with heavy loads. Ask your supervisor if you do not know the load limit.
- **Slopes and wet ground:** take extra care on slopes, in wet weather and on rough ground. Go straight up or down a slope, not across it, as you were trained. Brake gently, so you keep control and the load does not move.
- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use set routes and the main tracks and headlands your host shows you. Obey signs and speed limits, and slow down for turns, loads, people, dust, poor visibility and rough ground. Keep away from steep slopes, banks and water. Check behind you before reversing; if you cannot see that the way is clear, stop and ask for help.
- **Headlands and crossings:** headlands are the turning areas at the ends of the rows. Slow down, look both ways and give way as instructed. Watch for tractors, harvesters, trucks, people and vehicles coming out of rows. Use the horn as your host shows you: before you move off, and when you come near people or other vehicles.
- **Keep separate from machines.** Before you start, ask your host to show you where to work and how workers are kept away from machinery. If a machine comes into your work area, stop work, keep clear and tell your supervisor. Keep well away from trees being shaken: branches and nuts can fall. **Never approach a working machine** until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.

- **On foot:** when you get out, use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. Stop in a safe place before using a phone.
- **Parking:** park in a safe place away from moving vehicles. Put the park brake on, turn the Mule off, and return the key the way your host shows you, so the farm knows you are back safely.
- **Faults and breakdowns:** if the Mule or the spray unit will not start, breaks down or has a fault, tell your supervisor. Only trained maintenance staff do repairs. After any roll-over or crash, do not drive the Mule again until it has been checked by a professional and your host tells you it is safe to use.

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**, unless your host confirms that the label and farm instructions allow you to enter for your spraying job, and you have the training and PPE for it. Follow the label's instructions about entering sprayed areas. **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 vehicle helmet. 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 spot spraying work from a Mule with a hand wand. 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.**