

FGV Conference 2026 - Topics for today

1. Industry pressures in the spray application space – what can WE do about it?
2. Pest and disease issues that seem to be more prevalent and not going away – what's driving these issues?
3. Seeking help – who can you talk to? How can you make headway with ongoing spray application pressure points?
4. Education. It has been declining, and knowledge has been slipping away. How do we reverse that?
5. Simple and effective tools we can use to measure spray application to help us drive better outcomes – and believe me, it is **SIMPLE** to do with the right education & tools.

I will also cover some of the fundamental practices that I believe require greater attention in our tree crops.



Six challenges in the spray application space

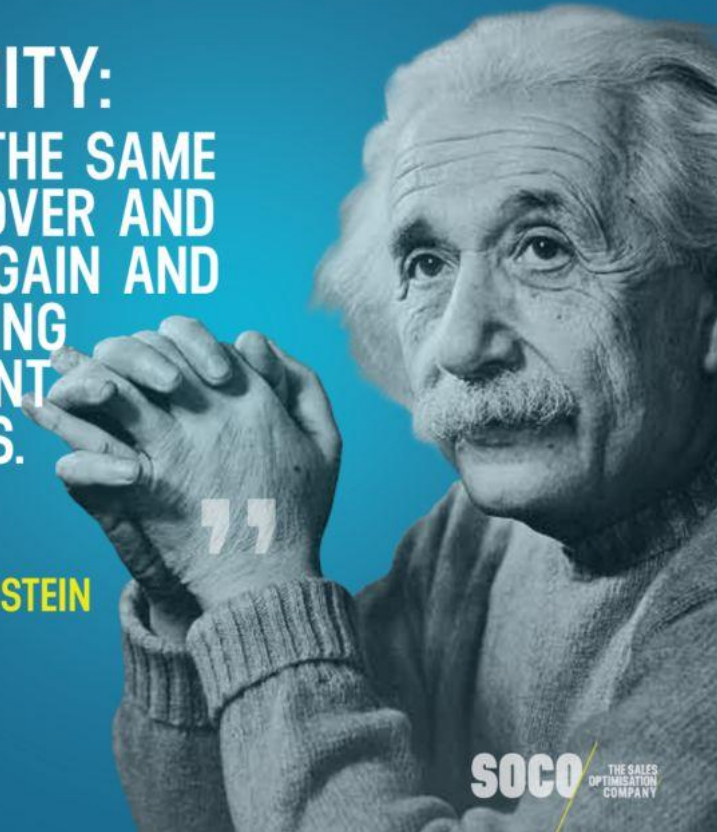
Spray application challenges	Current strategies	Risks	Opportunities
Labour	Employ whoever you can get	Mistakes will happen	Upskill and external training
Time pressure	- Do more with less - Spray every 2nd row - Spray faster	Pest & disease pressure will escalate	Review the fleet and hire good staff
Pest & disease buildup	- Put up with it until it needs urgent attention - Look for new products	- Pack-outs will suffer - Production could drop	Plan a strategy with your trusted agronomist
Input costs	- Reduce applications where possible - Use the lowest rate	A failure may occur resulting in crop & income loss	Look at different ways to manage application rates to match canopy development
Varying plantings	- Set up the sprayer for the best compromise - Have different sprayers	- Under or over-spraying - Different machines may confuse operators	Find settings that work for each canopy and create a simple set up guide
Sprayer maintenance	Wait till it breaks down, then fix it	It will happen at a critical time	Annual maintenance schedule

“

INSANITY:
DOING THE SAME
THING OVER AND
OVER AGAIN AND
EXPECTING
DIFFERENT
RESULTS.

”

ALBERT EINSTEIN



SOCO THE SALES OPTIMIZATION COMPANY

Engage the *right people* to help make necessary changes



Risky strategies – every 2nd row spraying



Full canopy, post harvest – plums; Speed 7.2 km/hr; 3 metre row width; 4.5m tree height; 650 L/ha spraying every 2nd row

Horizontal water sensitive papers – coverage also affected

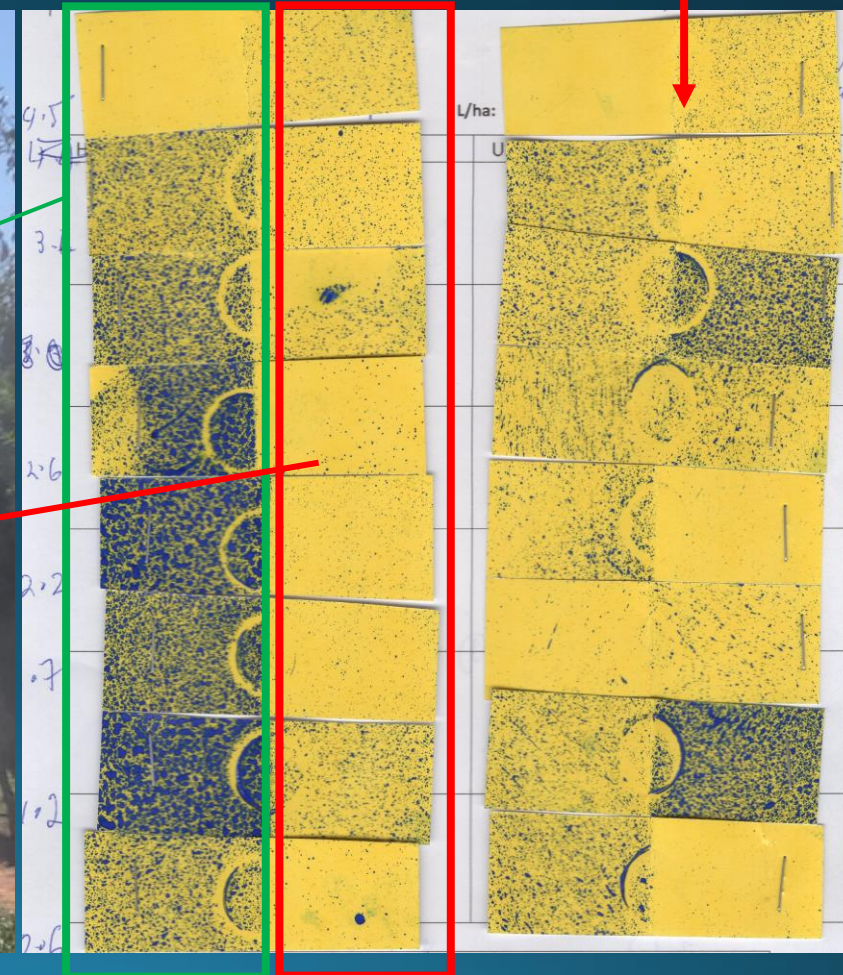
Vertical water sensitive papers



Right: Good coverage on the sprayer side (green box ✓).

Poor coverage on the inter-row side (red box, X).

Left: Significant spray plume loss to ground – approx. 40-50%.



Spray coverage-related pests & diseases showing up

Uncomfortable truths....right & below:

- Three problems showing up in the Goulburn valley – **all related to spray coverage and/or application rate issues.**
- We may blame the *program*, but usually it can be traced to *application and timing*.

Below left:

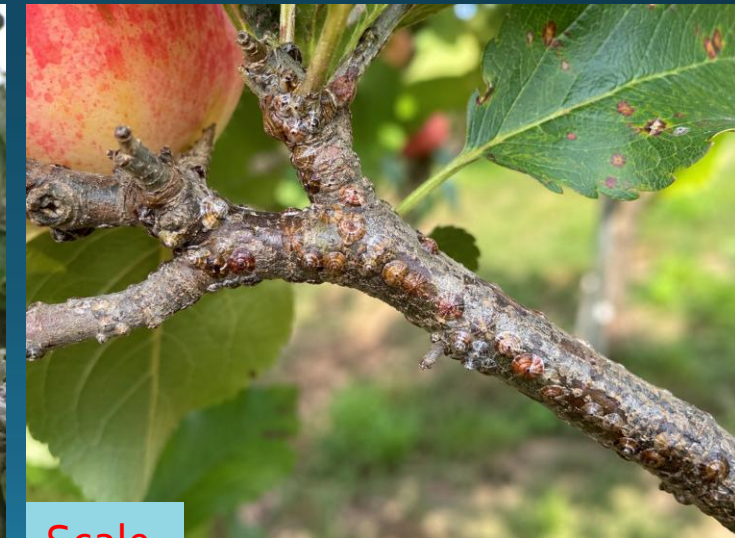
- Shadowing on the trunk & limbs in early season sprays – *exactly when you need to get on top of these three problems.*
- **Seriously exacerbated by every 2nd row application!**



Mealy bug



Powdery Mildew



Scale



Other pests & diseases on the rise

Pome fruit – top 5	Why it matters	Stonefruit – top 5	Why it matters
Queensland fruit fly	Expanding range; market risk	Brown rot / blossom blight	Major disease; resistance pressure
Mealybugs	Hidden sites; hard to reach	Queensland fruit fly	Fruit damage; market access
Scale insects	Sheltered pest; timing critical	Oriental fruit moth	Shoot & fruit damage
Alternaria / Glomerella	Increasing disease pressure	Western flower thrips	Resistance; difficult control
Black spot / scab	Fungicide resistance	Mites	Resistance; IPM disruption

I asked ChatGPT to research & tell me what APAL and Croplife were flagging as the major pests and diseases that are a threat. Here's the results.
All require good application for successful control.



Sensible strategy – full canopy, post harvest – Apr. 2026



Copyright: Hortspray

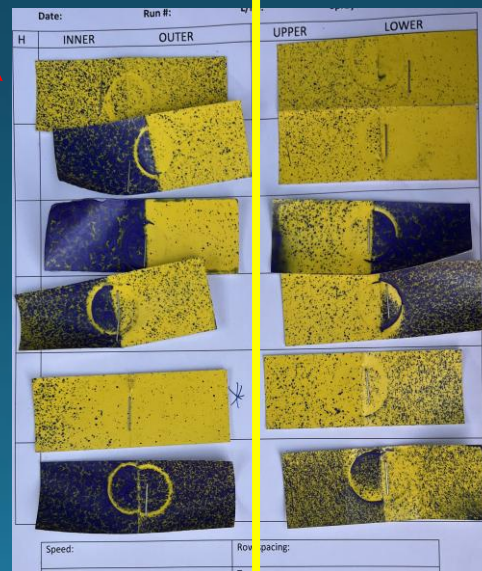
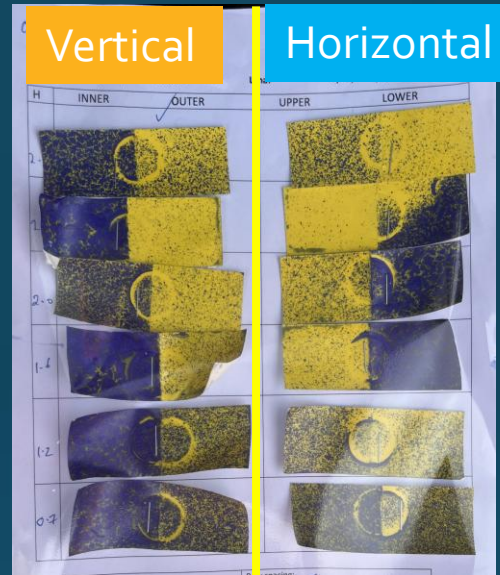
Apples – V-trellis, Rosy Glow, 5m spacing:

- Silvan Stilleto sprayer
- Spraying every row
- 7 nozzles per side going
- Rate = 1000 L/ha, 2X
- 6.3 km/hr travel speed
- Low fan setting, 540 Eco PTO speed
- 17-bar spray pressure
- 80-degree Albuz ATR nozzles

A well set up sprayer, at a good speed, correct fan speed, nozzles and rate ✓

Right top:
Papers at 50cm spacings, fixed vertical & horizontal position on outer canopy.
Excellent coverage.

Right bottom:
Papers at 50cm spacings, fixed vertical & horizontal position on inner canopy.
Excellent coverage.



Managing air – often overlooked



Copyright: Hortspray



Inter-row spray plume loss = 35-40%

Above: A good sprayer, doing a good job.....but improvements were made.



Inter-row spray plume loss reduced to <10%

PTO speed reduced to 400 from 540; a higher gear in the tractor selected to maintain original speed.
“Gear up, air down”.

Same sprayer, same block, same day, same application rate. 25-30% better deposition ✓

Varying crops and systems – how do we manage application?

Another challenge – 3-4 different planting systems on one farm.

Can one sprayer type do it all?

Probably not.....

One sprayer type can usually handle two to three different *conventional* growing systems – if it is set up right.

Start with your plantings & sprayers and work from there.



Circling back to challenges & opportunities

Spray application challenges	Opportunities
Labour	Upskill and external training
Time pressure	Review the fleet and hire good staff
Pest & disease buildup	Plan a strategy with your trusted agronomist
Input costs	Look at different ways to manage application rates to match canopy development
Varying plantings	Find settings that work for each canopy and create a simple set up guide
Sprayer maintenance	Annual maintenance schedule

In the first slide, we looked at the six top challenges we face in spray application, the risks they pose and the current way we deal with them.

The opportunity to drill down into these and make a difference, on-farm, comes down to one thing:

Upskilling; learning the fundamentals and applying them on YOUR farm.

How can we do that??

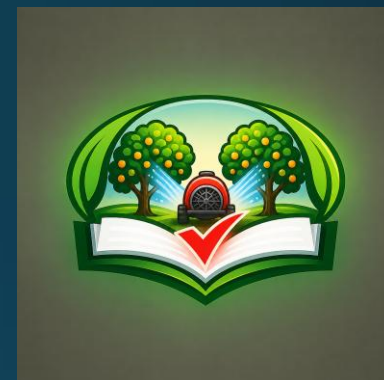


Spray application Masterclass 2027

In 2027, the goal is to run a training program aimed at operational staff to teach them the *really important, fundamental* spray application principles, and how to get them right.

Caveat: we will require funding but believe this can be achieved in time for a post harvest program.

When →	The aim is post-harvest 2027	Funding dependant
How →	- A 2.5-day program is envisaged to cover canopy spraying and under-tree spraying. - Industry funding will be required to design & write the program (TBA). - It will be held on an orchard (practical) with some inside work on theory and presentations by candidates & trainers.	The program will be written and delivered by Hortspray
Where →	It will be held in this region.	#1 place for results
What →	- Content will be aimed at improving outcomes in spray application, on farm. - Application tools for each candidate will be provided. - A follow up visit post-training will be done for each candidate, on their farm.	Squarely aimed at improving our industry outcomes
Who →	- Candidates will be interviewed and selected for a pilot program. - Each candidate will prepare a 20-minute presentation on a spray-related topic to be presented on the first day. - Candidates will be selected by a panel of three to ensure the pilot program delivers the intended outcome.	Likely 10 candidates maximum for the pilot
Future options →	- If successful, Almonds and other crops are planned. - If successful, ongoing programs will be planned.	Watch this space



Register your interest with FGV.

Disclaimer: Information provided is general in nature and should not be relied upon as professional advice. Growers should consider their individual circumstances and seek appropriate advice before making business or on-farm decisions.