

Farmer: Craig Barden
Region: NSW
Machine: Spra Coupe 4660

Increased demand for precision guidance systems, particularly for night spraying, has increased the focus on staying out in the paddock longer. So quick maths might suggest that reducing your tank capacity by 50 per cent defeats that purpose, but Gilgandra farmer and spraying contractor Craig Barden doesn't have that problem with his new Croplands Spra Coupe 4660. He traded a Croplands Stallion boomsprayer (3000L tank and 21m (70ft) boom) for the 4660, which is a self-propelled model featuring a 1514L capacity poly tank and a 24m (80ft) boom.

He made the move because he is increasing his contract work, particularly on row crops, and he wanted the ability to easily change row spacings in irrigated crops. A feature of the Spra Coupe is adjustable on-the-go row spacing from two metres (6.7ft) to 2.7m (9.1ft). An optional extension kit is available to allow for spacing as wide as 3m (10ft). "It also is a lighter unit than the old rig when spraying in wet conditions and it has more under frame clearance for foliar programs in chick peas and canola so I'm not damaging any crop," Craig said. "Without such machines the only option is a plane." Having clocked up 300 hours since buying the Spra Coupe, Craig is impressed by its performance and productivity.

With a 13,000L nurse tank on the back of a truck which comes to the sprayer, Craig has no problems staying out in the paddock longer to average around 60ha an hour including fills. "When I'm in full swing, I get around 72ha/hr," he said. "With the trailed Stallion I could average 40ha/hr." Again, quick maths will tell you that's a 60 per cent increase in productivity which is exactly what Craig wants as he looks to increase his contract work for winter and summer spraying. "There's a lot more flexibility with the Spra Coupe in terms of it being a self-contained unit which is ready-to-go and with the nurse tank I've got the ability to get jobs done quickly for clients."

Craig rates the Spra Coupe as ideal in both comfort and performance. "It certainly is a lot better driving the Spra Coupe than the old Landcruiser," he said. "It's quieter and more comfortable and in terms of controls, everything is where you want it."

Croplands has paid particular focus on soundproofing the cabin and providing an air-ride seat with air adjustable height control, fore and aft isolator, fore and aft adjustment, mechanical lumbar adjustment and adjustable armrests.

The boom can be dropped as low as 53.3cm (1.9ft) in the lowest setting and raised as high as 233.7cm (7.7ft) above the ground in the highest setting. "It's a heavier boom than the one I had before and is built to handle a range of tough conditions so I'm not worrying about whether it will stand up to the stresses," Craig said. "And the hydraulic fold is just another easy task when you're finished spraying and moving onto another paddock."

Craig also likes the Perkins Tier Three 92kW (125hp) engine linked to an Allison 2100 RDS five-speed automatic transmission. "It's a good torque motor and there's no

problems spraying around 30km/h with a full tank,” he said. “Depending on conditions, I generally operate around the 2100 rev range and I’m probably getting about 0.5L/ha which is not too bad. “And with the 175 L fuel tank there’s plenty of fuel for a full shift without re-filling.” Another feature Craig rates as “excellent” is the turning radius of the Spra Coupe. “You don’t need brakes and it’s easy to spin around, especially on the cotton rows,” he said.



Croplands salesman Luke Godber(left), Cornishs Gilgandra and Spra Coupe 4660 owner Craig Barden, Gilgandra discuss the features of the Croplands model which features a new 1514L poly tank and 24m (80ft) boom