

Farmer: Dave Proctor
Region: NSW
Machine: Rogator 1286

New South Wales spraying contractor Dave Proctor has 30 years of spraying experience under his belt. He first started spraying on his own property then started contract spraying in 1988. So he has literally ridden the wave of technology from his first 4WD 1979 Landcruiser fitted with a tray-mounted 15m(50ft) boom, to his new Croplands RoGator self-propelled 1286C boomsprayer he bought this year. "It's my first SP," Dave said, referring to the 1286C, "and I've got all the latest gear including auto boom shut-off, guidance system and auto steer.

"It's a far cry from the old Landcruiser which didn't even have air conditioning, so when you had the window down you copped all the spray drift as you worked round and round. "What a difference it is today, sitting high up in a comfortable enclosed cab with good visibility that gives you confidence to operate at speeds between 25-30km/h, with no smelly chemical wafting around and no hassles with knowing exactly where you are. "That was always a pain in the old days when foam markings either blew away in the wind or dissipated too quickly in the heat."

Now Dave has a totally integrated machine that not only is safer and far smoother across bumpy paddocks, but also provides him with productivity he could only dream about in the early days. "Before the 1286C I had a 24m Hayes and Baguley spray rig mounted on a Canter truck. I also have a CVX tractor with a Hayes and Baguley trailing boom which was 33m(110ft) and in good going I could get about 45ha an hour done," Dave said. "I've gone back to a 24m (80ft) boom with the 1286C and I'm achieving 50ha an hour in good conditions with the ability to go faster.

"Also the 6250L tank is the biggest around for SPs so I can get 125ha done on a tank load which keeps me out longer with turn-arounds about every three hours on average." Dave opted for the 24m boom because he mainly contracts to the Clyde Agricultural Group working in the Coonamble district. "They farm on tramlines on a 40-80 combination so it was easy for me to just use the 80 foot boom," Dave said.

With an annual program of more than 24,000ha (60,000ac) Dave has quickly chalked up 530 hours in the 1286C spraying about 12,000ha (29,700ac). "With other work on top of what I do for the Clyde Group, I'm hoping to nudge the 30,000ha (74,250ac) this year," he said. Those figures reflect the reason Dave chose a 1286C.

"The productivity and versatility is really paramount along with reliability because at the end of the day all the customer wants is the job done well," Dave said. "I literally can't afford to risk anything in contract spraying because any downtime costs me big time in income and can have a negative impact on cleaning up weed burdens when conditions are ideal to kill them. "There's probably nothing as frustrating as not being able to spray on a perfect spraying day because something is wrong with the sprayer." In that regard Dave considers all Croplands' components perform well. "I've had no trouble with the plumbing, no leaking of lines and no pumps jamming up so having those sorts of things not to worry about makes the job a little easier," he said.

Dave also has little to worry about in wet conditions with the 1286C providing good traction via hydrostatically-driven wheels. Sampo radial piston wheel motors, are directly mounted to all four corners offering full-time four-wheel drive with the Sauer Danfoss hydrostat transmission driving the wheel motors in an X pattern. This ensures that if one wheel breaks traction, at least two are still driving. A six-speed range transmission allows multiple on-the-go gear selection to match operating speed and again reflects the advances in technology design. "Gear selection is another worry taken away from you," Dave said. "You're working in a brilliantly comfortable cab and basically concentrating on computer readouts.

"With the Canter and a 2400L tank and an 80 foot boom it was really hard work compared with the 1286C. "The other aspect is safety and with the mixing vat at a convenient height at ground level, I no longer have to lift chemical drums above my head to fill tanks. "It's another part of an integrated system that works really well and just shows how far we've come from the days of chemical drum stacks in the paddock and the manual handling and mixing."

The 1286C employs a front-mounted 8.8L Caterpillar C9 electronically-controlled engine with 232kW engine power rising to 251kW with an eight per cent power bulge. The power bulge takes effect immediately the machine drops below rated revs, and with direct plumbing from the hydrostat to the wheel motors, power transfer is maintained without surging, leading to longer wear life of the wheel motors.

Pressure-compensated hydraulics also reduce horsepower requirements which in turn reduces oil heating and strain while the liquid system product pump has dedicated hydraulics, so steering or boom functions don't affect the liquid pump output. To add to reliability and performance, the 1286C is equipped with a 227 litre (60 gallon) hydraulic reservoir to ensure there is plenty of oil in the system allowing it to be properly cooled and filtered to maintain peak performance.

