

RAILROAD WEED CONTROL RIGHTS-OF-WAY CONTRACT APPLICATION

The following is excerpted from an interview with John B. Roy, president of Railroad Weed Control, Inc. with offices in Westfield, Mass., and Westerville, Ohio. Roy is currently chairman of the Public Relations Committee for the Northeastern Weed Science Society.

Railroad Weed Control, Inc. operates in a 23 state area east of the Mississippi River

How much equipment do you maintain?

Railroad Weed Control has 20 spray trucks. These are hi-rail trucks that spray weeds and brush along the tracks. In addition, we have four railway spray cars with which we form spray trains, using tank cars and chemical mixes. Our hi-rail trucks range in cost from \$35-45,000 apiece. We try to maintain them for six years before the depreciation value becomes too great.

What types of chemicals do you primarily use?

We use chemicals from all the major suppliers. Our soil sterilants are from DuPont, CIBA-GEIGY, and Elanco. We use contact killers out of Vineland or Crystal Chemical and we use phenoxy herbicides for weed, brush and grass control out of DOW, Amchem and Velsicol. We use combinations of products in our mixes and we also use straight soil sterilants.

Spraying a railroad is a three-fold operation. A yard program is



A long stretch of railroad rights-of-way can be sprayed utilizing a railroad spray car and a train of tankers.

RAILROAD WEED CONTROL

primarily soil sterilants. The line-road program for weed and grass control is a combination of products, normally three: a soil sterilant, a contact weed killer and a systemic herbicide. Then, we use a phenoxy type herbicide for brush control.

How large of a staff do you maintain and what are the members primary functions?

We have approximately 15 full time people. Besides sales management, we also have supervisory people that handle the actual operations in the field.

We generally have one or two man crews on our trucks. Our preemergent program is all one man crews and our line and road program and brush program are all two man crews, sometimes three.

Do you actively seek spraying jobs?

We pretty much work with the railroad. We help the railroad program their vegetation control needs. Our suppliers, or major manufacturers of the products, make recommendations. Then we sit down with the railroad and try to work out a program that will meet their budget.

Because of our years of experience, eighteen now, we know pretty much who the railroads are, what they do, and what kind of programs they've had.

How do you estimate what a job will cost?

It depends upon the acreage the railroad plans to treat per mile, the seriousness of the problem, and how much chemical is going to be re-

A clean railroad yard promotes safety and efficiency.





Hi-rail trucks, ready to roll.

quired to eliminate or control that problem. We base it on how long the job is going to take, what it is going to cost, and where we have to go to do the job.

We're very specialized. We only do vegetation control, weed, grass, and brush, on railroads with our equipment.

How do you bill the railroads?

We normally bill on completion of each phase of the program. If a railroad has the yard program, it usually starts before the weeds start to emerge. When weeds and grass grow, we bill it upon completion of that program. If we have a large contract, we might bill weekly, on a production basis.

Line and road programs usually begin the middle of June and continue only into July. We do that in the same manner. It's billed by division, or region, each phase of the program. We handle brush control the same way.

When do you usually purchase chemicals? Do you keep large inventories?

We try to keep our inventories as low as possible, especially during

the slow times of year, normally October through the first of March. Then we get the materials we need and bring it in as required.

What do you see in the future for Railroad Weed Control, Inc.?

We're trying to do more business with the railroads we're presently working with. In other words, a lot of these railroads don't have their budgets where they should be to take care of the problems with the railroad. The key is to have railroads do more weed and brush control.

Are there other problems particular to railroad weed control?

The Department of Transportation insists that railroads have a good visibility and safe operating conditions. Vegetation control is very important in that respect.

Is there much competition in this aspect of weed control?

There's a lot of competition in this area. There's probably seven major people in this business in the country. There's a number of smaller applicators.



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