

Electrostatic sprayer to benefit smaller growers

The latest machine by On Target Spray Systems combines the latest technology with a price that won't send small growers running.

Kellie Arbuckle

A SPRAYER THAT provides the benefits of electrostatic technology at a competitive price has been specifically developed for smaller grapegrowers. The Cube is the latest spray machine by On Target Spray Systems – the developers of crop spraying technology that uses an electrical charge to create a fine mist of uniform, electrostatic droplets.

Until now, this technology has only been available on the On Target Sprayer – larger spray units ranging in price from \$28,000-55,000. The sprayer boasts thorough coverage, up to 90% less water usage and a reduced need to repeat application, resulting in savings on money, diesel, labour and chemicals. Other benefits are that the machine can be used with almost any chemical and it's less noisy.

But while the benefits are vast, the price of the technology is often enough to put growers off altogether. Willie Hartman of On Target Spray Systems said The Cube was designed to specifically cater for these growers.

"We had a lot of vineyard managers who liked the technology – that it's environmental and works well – but they had a hard time justifying the costs," Hartman said.

The Cube costs around \$24,500 in Australasia. It is a self-

contained unit and is powered by a low-fuel consumption Honda V-twin engine.

Hartman said the second issue for many small grapegrowers was the need to buy a tractor that had enough horsepower to run a conventional airblast sprayer.

"That's why we decided to create a self-contained unit – so they can use the machine with a tractor that doesn't require high horsepower."

The Cube takes up to 190 litres of chemical, which can cover up to an entire three-hectare vineyard with a low volume application.

Weighing just over 240kg, The Cube is a relatively light-weight machine and less likely to compact the soil.

The machine is also suitable for attaching to an ATV, for fitting through narrow rows and features a quiet German-made Kaeser Tri-lobe rotary blower.

"The payback on this system is also incredibly quick. Large growers can pay the machine off in just a season, while for small growers it might take about three years," Hartman said.

Aaron Weinkauff, winemaker and vineyard manager at Spottswoode Estate in St Helena, California, bought The Cube for a number of reasons.

"Compaction can be an issue and spraying is the most common practice we do in the vineyard, so the reduced weight was highly attractive," Weinkauff said.

Spottswoode has been farming organically since 1985, so reduced chemical input was also a bonus of The Cube.

"Prior to The Cube, we were using an airblast sprayer and finding that the coverage was always good on one side, but negligible on a shielded side," Weinkauff said.

"Working with the 'charged technology' seemed very realistic. We specifically chose to work with On Target because we appreciated the sensible design features, the more commonly available parts and what we believed to be a sincere desire to make changes and improvements to the unit.

"We were able to spray more quickly using less water and product, and we had no considerable mildew issues."

While Weinkauff spent the same amount on The Cube as he did on his previous airblast sprayer, he says the savings of The Cube have held true.

"We were using close to 15 per cent of the water we would have used with the previous sprayers and 30-40 per cent of the chemical product that we would have been using," he said.

"Plus, On Target has been great to work with and we do plan to purchase another."

More information at www.ontargetspray.com or to arrange a demonstration, phone sole Australasian agent Greg Marshall on: (08) 8388 4414 or 0407 014 627.



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