The residual characteristics of common herbicides in California have been studied for over seven years at various locations throughout California from Tulelake in the north to El Centro in the south. The many differences in crops, soils and climates, cause great differences in the length of time soil-applied chemicals remain active.

The main factors influencing the breakdown of a specific herbicide (which can be altered by cultural practices) are the methods of incorporation and the amount of soil moisture. Other factors such as light, temperature, microbial breakdown, organic matter, and clay content of the soil cannot usually be manipulated.

In the study reported here, incorporation by power tiller was compared under sprinkler and furrow irrigation. Pre-emergence applications and use of sprinklers were also compared with incorporation under sprinkler and furrow irrigation at the West Side Field Station near Five Points, California. The soil analysis showed 2.8 per cent organic matter, 24 per cent sand, 44 per cent silt and 31 per cent clay.

Herbicides were applied on December 17, 1968. Twenty treatments were incorpo-
imported to a depth of 4 inches with a straight tooth power-driven rototiller. Twenty-one other herbicide treatments were left on the surface and sprinkler-irrigated immediately after application. Eighteen treatments received mechanical incorporation and sprinkler irrigation. Four months after herbicide applications, six crops were planted and then evaluated on May 13, 1969. Eight months later four new crops were seeded, allowed to grow for about a month, and then evaluated. One year after application, six crops were again planted and evaluated by phytotoxicity ratings.

Phytotoxicity

Phytotoxicity readings indicated a wide difference between residual characteristics of the herbicides tested. Some herbicides evaluated under the different cultural methods showed considerable differences in residual characteristics due to cultural practices. The crops used for evaluation varied greatly in their sensitivity to herbicide residues.

Trifluralin showed essentially no residue when applied to the surface and sprinkler-irrigated, however, when this herbicide was mechanically incorporated, and then sprinkler- or furrow-irrigated, some residual effect on test plants resulted (table 1).

Nitralin showed similar residual effects (particularly on susceptible crops) as trifluralin, except under sprinkler irrigation where considerably greater residual effects were observed at 4 months than with trifluralin. The amount of residual activity under sprinkler irrigation had largely dissipated by 8 months.

DCPA

DCPA (dacthal) like nitralin showed some residual effects at exceedingly high rates (i.e., 32 lbs per acre) under sprinkler irrigation and slightly more when mechanically incorporated.

Dyphenamid and prometryne showed very little residual effects under any method of incorporation at four months after herbicide application.

Results with pyrazon (Pyramin) showed considerable residual effects at the high rate 4 months after application to the soil surface, and when sprinkler irrigated. However, with mechanical incorporation, considerable crop injury was observed even at 4 lbs and 8 months. By one year, most of the pyrazon had dissipated. These results are consistent with two previous residue trials in the same soil (West Side Field Station).

At rates of 256 lbs, MSMA showed some slight phytotoxicity particularly on barley at 4 months, but virtually none at 8 months. No phytotoxicity was observed at rates of 16 to 64 lbs (table 2).

2,4-D and dalapon, like MSMA, showed very little phytotoxicity even at 64 lbs per acre 4 months after application. No residue was observed at the later dates after application.

Conclusions

Herbicides responded very differently under furrow irrigation, where they were incorporated into the bed top, than under sprinklers where they were sprayed on the bed top and sprinkled into the soil. Much shorter residual effects resulted from surface application of trifluralin. Nitralin showed more residues on the soil surface than trifluralin.

Prometryne was essentially gone after 4 months. Dyphenamid showed only slight residual effects at four months. Pyrazon, on the other hand, lasted about 8 months, and like trifluralin, caused less residual effects when incorporated by sprinkler irrigation than by power tiller. DCPA showed less residual effects on the soil surface than when incorporated, even at high rates, but effects lasted only about 4 months when incorporated.

Three post-emergence herbicides commonly applied to the foliage of weeds showed essentially no residual effects on crops even at rates higher than the potential load on soil resulting from 4 to 16 years of continuous application.

A. H. Lange is Extension Weed Control Specialist, San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center; B. B. Fischer is Farm Advisor, Fresno County; and R. Hoover is Superintendent, West Side Field Station. Assistance was received from Fred Fischer, West Side Field Station, Five Points.