



## Butts in the Burdekin Dry Tropics

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### Spray workshops a success

By Terry Butts

IT ALL started back in December last year when the Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM announced results of its intensive five year water quality project in the Burdekin catchment - a project that involved a legion of landholders who volunteered to collect water from 54 sites for sampling before and after heavy rains and floods.

The results showed traces of the controversial chemicals Diuron and Tebuthurion and herbicides Atrazine and Amatrryn. The Barattas had the highest levels of nitrogen and the runoff from the Bowen, Clarke and Bogie with high sediment loads was considered a threat to the health of Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

So the landholders have united again. But this time not to collect water but to learn ways and methods of keeping the water pure during the spraying of their crops against weed, disease and pests.

They have turned out in large numbers to workshops staged by Burdekin Productivity Services and Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and funded by Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM, featuring renowned Toowoomba based spray application specialist Graham Betts.

It was originally planned to conduct just two workshops last week, but they have been so successful and well attended, five extra workshops and field days were conducted this week.

More than 60 growers along with representatives from CANEGROWERS, Elders, Landmark, Burdekin Bowen Integrated Flood Management Advisory Committee (BBIFMAC), A&B Rural, agronomists from BSES and Futurecane and a private consultant from Cropcare in Innisfail attended.

Landholders and suppliers have been learning about the mode of action of the chemicals, the benefits of adjuvants, understanding spray application, the importance of choosing the right nozzle and the influence of weather, wind direction and temperature when spraying.

They also heard from Futurecane staff and Australian Centre Tropical Fish Research (ACTFR) on the water quality results from the Demonstration Farms to show the impact of chemical use and monitoring water quality.

Apart from soil and groundwater contamination to the Barrier Reef over application is uneconomical for the grower. Mr Betts also addresses the concern with drift, as other crops including cotton and horticulture are forming boundaries to cane farms in the region.



*Grower Joe Lago and Chris Hesp (MAFIA Grower Group) watch as Graham Bett's and Lee Aure (MAFIA Grower Group) check the calibration and nozzle spray range of the Australian Agricultural College Burdekin Campus's Irvine Legs spray rig.*