



## S.A.F.E. program prepares aerial applicators

Rich Keller and Jennifer Marsik Friess | Updated: 04/07/2014

Calibration fly-ins are held nationally to assure that aerial applicators' equipment is working properly and pilot technique is appropriate for applying all types of crop protection products. The fly-ins offer pilots a precise picture of agricultural airplane spray characteristics plus consultation for pilots to make immediate corrections to improve performance.

K&P Flying Service, Inc. at Watson, Ark., recently hosted a Professional Application Analysis Clinic, or Operation S.A.F.E., to prepare for the spring and summer season. The National Agricultural Aviation Association Research & Education Foundation in partnership with the National Agricultural Aviation Association established Operation S.A.F.E., and it is the acknowledged premier program for education and equipment function.

What made the Watson, Ark., fly-in different than many was the addition of an educational workshop for farmers and crop consultants followed by ground equipment analysis and calibration. An additional incentive for the farmers and consultants to attend was topics covered in the workshop as part of the calibration including tank agitation, uniform mixing procedures for spray mixes as well as uniform spreading of dry fertilizer.

Brenda Watts owner, operator of K&P Flying Service, also saw an advantage of showing farmers and consultants how aerial applicators achieve perfection by having them see the thorough analysis and training from certified analysts who transfer the specifics of Operation S.A.F.E. to aerial applicators.

Certified S.A.F.E. analysts John Garr of adjuvant manufacturer GarrCo Products, Inc. and Dennis Gardisser, Ph.D., of WRK of Arkansas LLC., an application technology and aviation insurance company, were in charge of the fly-in. Both of them have about 30 years of combined experience as analysts. They donated their expertise, time and equipment to conduct the fly-in as a fundraiser for the NAAA at its convention, and Watts won an auction for their services.

In 2012, 508 NAAA members were surveyed, and Watts was one of only three business women applicators in the group. Watts is thought to be one of only two women operators in Arkansas.

Gardisser is a member of both the NAAA and Arkansas Agricultural Aviation Association Hall of Fames. Aerial applicators are extremely important in Arkansas agriculture, he noted. "You can't produce rice without aerial applicators. Arkansas produces 40 percent of the rice grown in the U.S., and Arkansas has more aerial applicators than any other state."

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