Reminders for Improved Drop Spreader Performance

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The two basic types of equipment used to apply granular fertilizers or pesticides to turfgrass are drop, sometimes called gravity, and rotary spreaders. Drop spreaders deliver a uniform pattern similar in width as the opening of the spreader. As a result, this type of spreader is accurate in delivering a granular product to a targeted area and therefore is useful in edging application like driveway and ornamental beds, and small confined areas. Additionally, the drift potential is low, reducing the risk of off-site movement of the applied materials. One draw-back to drop spreaders is that the agitator in the bottom of the hopper may break the coating of some slow-release fertilizers, which negates the intended purpose of these materials.

Reminders for proper use of drop spreaders:
★ To minimize spillage, choose a spreader that is easy to fill and clean
★ Familiarize yourself with the adjustments specific to your spreader, not all spreaders operate by the same mechanism and therefore openings are adjusted differently
★ Do not assume the spreader is properly adjusted from the factory, check adjustments and calibration with each material used
★ Make sure ports (the bottom holes the material falls out of) are closed prior to filling spreader
★ Fill the hopper on sidewalks or driveways, never on the lawn, then move to the starting point on the lawn
★ Use a cover to minimize spills when in operation, especially in uneven terrain
★ Use a street, sidewalk, or similar surface along the border to guide your first pass
★ Walk at a constant speed, 3 MPH is typically recommended
★ Apply materials while moving in a forward direction
★ Start walking before opening the gate of the spreader and close the gate before stopping
★ Avoid sharp turns, the applications becomes uneven
★ Turn off spreader before making a turn
★ Make two “header” laps around the perimeter and then fill in the interior of the area
★ Avoid application “skips” and overlapping swaths by slightly overlapping wheel tracks of the previous pass
★ Avoid fertilizer or pesticide application to non-target areas (driveways, roads, bodies of water)
★ Blow or sweep material from hard, impermeable surfaces into the turf area
★ After use, empty the unused material to its original container and wash thoroughly
★ Avoid washing the spreader in an area where the rinseate can get into the storm sewage
★ Grease and oil all moving parts as recommended by the manufacturer
★ Check and maintain proper tire pressure