

Grand prize makes a great enhancement to sprayer!

Written by Carolyn King



Cliff Sime has won the grand prize in Top Crop Manager's Season Ready Contest: a UC4+™ automatic boom height control system from NORAC Systems International Inc.

The Simes farm near Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, and crop about 10,000 acres. The UC4+™ system is making an excellent addition to their recently purchased John Deere 4730 high clearance sprayer with a 100-foot boom.

"When you're travelling at relatively high speeds and having 100 feet on a frame with all the dips and hollows that you have, it's nice not having to worry about controlling boom height. As long as there isn't a really abrupt change in the topography of the land, the NORAC system makes the boom follow the contour of the land very, very well," Sime says. "We really enjoy it."

The UC4+™ uses automatic sonar sensors to maintain the spray boom at a predetermined height from the ground or crop. Craig Lester of NORAC explains, "We tie the ultrasonics in with the hydraulics of the sprayer and give the operator the opportunity to program in his desired spray height. That enables him to drive faster which allows him to cover more acres in a day, and do a better job of spraying because he's spraying at the height that the spray tip manufacturers recommend to get the proper application of the chemicals. It takes away a lot of the stress of operating those big sprayers."

Lester adds, "Guys who are running a sprayer without an automatic height controller may start at the beginning of the day with the boom down where it's supposed to be, but as they get tired, they move it up higher and higher because there's less chance of the boom hitting the ground and being damaged. But the higher the boom goes, the more risk there is for the chemical to drift. Drift has the potential to cause health problems and damage neighbouring crops."

Sime notes, "Maintaining the proper boom height to have adequate spray coverage, minimize drift and prevent boom damage are all very important to us. The NORAC system just makes it so easy!"

The UC4+™ system with three sensors on the boom retails for \$8,300. Sime's prize also included free delivery, installation and training on the UC4+, for a total value of about \$10,000.

"Installation is not complicated but it's a full day's job," explains Lester. "There's wiring that runs the length of the boom and to do a neat install you've got to tie it up with little plastic cable ties, so it's time-consuming to do a professional-looking job for the customer."

Operating the UC4+™ is straightforward, says Sime. "My son [Craig Sime] took the training because he does 99% of our spraying, and I believe it was quite simple. I've operated it and it's very user-friendly."

The UC4+™ comes with an operator's manual and a quick guide, and NORAC provides technical support by phone and has field service technicians.

For more information on the UC4+™, visit www.norac.ca. NORAC, a Saskatoon-based company, has been working with ultrasonics to provide depth and height control for various types of agricultural equipment for over 30 years.