

# MANAGE RESISTANCE *Now*

Protect your land, one field at a time

## CASE STUDY BRIAN RIDEOUT

Apple Producer at Manintree Fruit Farms, Blenheim, ON



## Apple grower practices diligent management to fight disease and fungicide resistance

Brian Rideout manages more than 400 acres of fruit at Manintree Fruit Farms, including 130 acres of 11 different apple varieties near Blenheim, Ontario. As production has increased over the years, so has the need to remain vigilant in the fight against various disorders, such as powdery mildew, apple scab and forms of rot.

### Fungicide resistance

When he began farming 20 years ago there were issues with powdery mildew. It flourished in the hot and humid southern Ontario climate that's on a similar latitude as northern California, just steps from Lake Erie. By observing leaf deficiencies, Rideout was able to blend a foliar micronutrient program with fungicide applications. The greater efficacy of the micronutrients allowed him to cut back on his fungicide usage. Ultimately, the mildew went away through diligent management.

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Today, his largest issue is apple scab. Rideout scouts every day for one to two hours. If he identifies areas that are approaching their economic threshold of disease, he will spray.

### Best management practices

Rideout is always aware of the potential resistance risk, especially as he sprays his apples every 10 to 14 days during the growing season. That is why he mixes and rotates his fungicides.

"Variety is the spice of life. You cannot go out and just hammer it with the same product, that's going to come back and get you. You have to look at all your resources and be open to try everything and any product," he says.

"We will pick a fungicide program where we will mix our Group M fungicides with another group. It allows us to cut back on our use of Group M and include another group," he says. "Some products that work for scab will also work for other diseases. When we pick a product we look at efficacy, weather fastness, such as UV and rain factors, and the number of uses that we can get out of a growing season."

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His strategy is to select a chemistry that is a premix of two groups or one single group. He sprays for plant health, insects and disease. While he will go back-to-back with a chemistry, he will never use a third straight application because of the risk of resistance.

It's even more critical to implement a diversity of best management practices today as certain products are currently under review or have had their labels changed for use by Health Canada. “With the possibility of reduced uses of certain fungicides, growers better be proactive and know what they can put on their trees,” he says. “Because of what might happen with reduced usage of products, I am voluntarily forcing myself to look at other alternatives.”

### **Grower education**

To stay on top of the latest issues and concerns related to orchard health, Rideout has been attending professional development conferences and grower meetings for the last 20 years. Today, as a member of the Ontario Apple Growers (OAG), he cannot stress enough how important it is to constantly educate oneself for continued success.

“I'll spend 15 to 20 days in a winter re-educating myself on what's coming up and trying to know what the trends will be for next year, and that is just when it comes to chemistry,” he says.

“By speaking to men and women from other growing areas you can find out new methods, new tank mixes, leading-edge concepts and growing systems,” says Rideout. “Growers have to be seeking information wherever and whenever they can find it. It doesn't matter if it's conventions, association meetings or even YouTube.”

### **Bright future**

Within the last five years, the OAG started linking together a group of young farmers dubbed the Ontario Young Apple Farmers.

According to Rideout, these individuals are not only challenging him in a positive way, they are a guarantee that the future of the apple industry is in good hands.

“It's been phenomenal and it doesn't stop,” he says, of the ongoing conversations that happen primarily through WhatsApp. “These young apple farmers want a strong, Ontario-brand apple. We educate each other by sharing successes and follies. That exchange of information of an actual grower saying, ‘hey, I did this and it worked’ is worth its weight in gold.”

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