

## Setting up for the season

# VRT preparation

Ed Cay, *gps-Ag*

**Ed Cay, SPAA Committee member and variable rate technology (VRT) project manager with *gps-Ag* has produced this quick check list to help those setting-up to use variable rate inputs this season.**

Suggested Timing	Checklist	✓
<b>December - January</b>	<p>Process last season's yield data and other spatial information and establish management zones. (ref SPAA newsletter Summer 08 – <a href="http://www.spaa.com.au">www.spaa.com.au</a>)</p> <p><i>Tip: There are now data processors that can perform this task and costs are becoming increasingly competitive. Contact SPAA for more information.</i></p>	
<b>February</b>	<p>Soil samples should be taken as part of the normal testing program and used to ground truth management zones. These tests need to be taken within zones (ref Precision Ag News Vol 4.2) Timing is important as soil test results can take six weeks.</p> <p>Modify zones, if required, based on ground truthing. If using yield maps or remotely sensed images, this often means accounting for human influences on the crop's performance ie, blocked fertiliser hoses.</p>	
<b>March</b>	<p>Attach input rates to zones and create the prescription files.</p> <p><i>Tip: Use summary reports from your software or data processor to assist with ordering inputs, which usually become harder to calculate under zone management.</i></p>	
	<p>Copy last season's data from your memory card/USB onto your computer and then clean the storage device ready for the new season.</p> <p><i>Tip: Take the opportunity to make a back-up copy of all data to a CD, remote hard drive or other memory device. Computers can crash!</i></p>	
	<p>Testing different rates of input or comparing VR to traditional blanket rate applications is often neglected in the rush of sowing. You cannot calculate the benefit of VR over a blanket rate system without test strips. Test strips can usually be created in the software but it is often easier to do strip trials or use markers in the paddock so that they line up with existing guidance/autosteer lines.</p> <p><i>Tip: Input rates in test strips will be recorded on the application maps from the controller but it is good to put a marker on the fence or write down the swath number on the guidance/autosteer. (ref SPAA newsletter Autumn 08 – <a href="http://www.spaa.com.au">www.spaa.com.au</a>).</i></p>	
<b>April</b>	<p>In early April do a 'dummy run' to test your prescription map with your seeding equipment. This is the most important preparation step for a successful VR sowing season. Check that the rates on all bins change as you drive over different zones. Doing this well before sowing starts gives time for parts or service delivery if required. It is also a chance to check the GPS receiver is working correctly on the controller, especially if it was configured differently to communicate with the yield monitor.</p> <p>Last minute changes to prescription maps may be required due to a change in expected seasonal conditions. Most software will allow for you to edit the maps rather than have to start from scratch, or, some controllers will allow for rate changes on the screen.</p>	

### For more information

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