

CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Product / Service: Application of glyphosate (RoundUp) on soybeans

Business: You are a sales person working for the local Dirt Road Feeds & More. Your customer base ranges from the newer, hobby-farmer to the experienced farmer or rancher. Your company sells corn, soybean, wheat, oat, and forage crop seeds and also the necessary fertilizer and pesticide/herbicide chemicals to assist with the growing of such crops. Your company also offers a chemical application service where you will spray crop fields with the necessary herbicides/pesticides to control weeds and pests in crop fields.

Situation: Glyphosate, commonly known as RoundUp is a herbicide that kills virtually all plants that it comes in contact with. Seed companies have developed crops that are genetically engineered to be resistant to the effects of Glyphosate. Therefore, these RoundUp-ready varieties of crops are very popular and allow farmers to spray their fields for weeds after the crop seeds have sprouted.

On April 19th, a farmer planted soybeans purchased from another seed dealer. The growing conditions were good and the farmer called Dirt Road Feeds & More to place an order that their soybean crop be sprayed with RoundUp on May 10th. It is now May 13th and the customer has come into the store to complain that half of their soybean plants are dead after spraying. The customer is certain that your company has sprayed the field with something besides RoundUp and that is what has caused half of the soybeans to die.

Complaint #1: “My soybeans looked great and now half of them are dead because you sprayed them with the wrong herbicide!”

Dirt Road Feeds & More Store Policies and other relevant information:

1. All our chemical applicators are licensed and qualified to apply chemicals. Before any field is sprayed, our policy is to confirm with the farmer that the correct field is being sprayed with the correct herbicide and/or pesticide.
2. Log sheets from the chemical plant and the applicator are kept and monitored closely by office staff to assure and confirm that the correct blend and amount of chemicals are applied. This also ensures accurate billing of customers. You have checked the log sheets and can confirm that the fields were applied Roundup at the correct rate of 22 ounces per acre.
3. It is the sales person’s responsibility to determine if problems are a result of customer failure or a defect with the product or applicator. Sales staff have the authority to reasonably correct poor customer service.
4. If merchandise is deemed defective, the sales person should attempt to replace it. If the problem is due to customer failure, the salesperson should provide suggestions to fix the problems.
5. If Dirt Road Feeds damages a crop due to over-spray, it is typical to provide re-plant seeds at a reduced cost to the customer.

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On April 19th, a YOU planted soybeans purchased from Speedy Seeds, Inc., an on-line seed company that guarantees the lowest-cost on crop seeds in the Midwest! You had ordered 8 bags of RoundUp Ready soybean seeds and received them via UPS; half of the bags were in good condition and clearly marked with tags. However, half of the bags looked as if they had been re-bagged and re-stitched, with some tape on one end; the bag tags were missing, but they were all the same color as the other bags. The growing conditions were good and YOU called Dirt Road Feeds & More to place an order that your soybean crop be sprayed with RoundUp on May 10th. It is now May 13th and not only are all the weeds in the soybean field dead, but half of the soybeans are dead as well!! YOU have come into the store to complain and get some financial compensation for having your soybean crop destroyed. YOU are certain that your company has sprayed the field with something besides RoundUp and that is what has caused half of the soybeans to die.

Complaint #1: “My soybeans looked great and now half of them are dead because you sprayed them with the wrong herbicide!”

The student should ask probing questions to determine the cause of the problem. DO NOT VOLUNTEER ANY INFORMATION, BUT IF ASKED BY THE STUDENT THIS IS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED:

#1. YOU purchased the seed from an on-line seed company.

#2. YOU noticed that the half of the bags of seed were damaged and had been re-sealed. The tags of those bags were missing.

Conclusion: YOU planted seed that must not have been RoundUp Ready and therefore, these plants died when sprayed. **The student should determine the problems are due to poor service from the other seed company. The student should:**

- **Explain why it isn't their company's fault the plants died**
- **Offer to assist with documenting the situation to help the customer get a refund from the on-line seed company.**
- **Attempt to sell the customer replacement seed that is RoundUp Ready so that the customer can re-plant. They may even offer re-plant seed or additional RoundUp Spraying at a reduced cost to secure a long-term relationship with the customer.**