

**ENGINEERING AND ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF  
ANTITRANSPIRANTS FOR INCREASING  
RUNOFF IN COLORADO WATERSHEDS**

by

**Jay E. Anderson and Frank Kreith**



**Colorado Water**

Resources Research Institute

**Completion Report No. 69**

**Colorado  
State**  
University

ENGINEERING AND ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION  
OF ANTITRANSPIRANTS FOR INCREASING  
RUNOFF IN COLORADO WATERSHEDS

Completion Report

OWRT Project No. B-099-COLO

by

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submitted to

Office of Water Research and Technology

U. S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

September, 1975

The work upon which this report is based was supported in part by funds provided by the United States Department of the Interior, Office of Water Research and Technology, as authorized by the Water Resources Research Act of 1964, and pursuant to Grant Agreement No.(s) 14-31-0001-4065.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES CENTER  
Colorado State University  
Fort Collins, Colorado

Norman A. Evans, Director

**SELECTED WATER  
RESOURCES ABSTRACTS****INPUT TRANSACTION FORM**

1. Report No.

2.

3. Accession No.

**W****4. Title** Evaluation of Antitranspirants for Increasing  
Runoff in Colorado Watersheds**5. Report Date****6.****8. Performing Organization  
Report No.****7. Author(s)**  
Jay E. Anderson and Frank Kreith**10. Project No.**

OWRT B-099-COLO

**9. Organization**  
University of Colorado, Department of Chemical  
Engineering**11. Contract/Grant No.****13. Type of Report and  
Period Covered****12. Sponsoring Organization****15. Supplementary Notes****16. Abstract**

Experiments were performed in the laboratory and in the field to determine the effectiveness of 3 different types of film forming antitranspirants in reducing the evapotranspiration from phreatophytes, with special emphasis on salt cedar. The antitranspirants tested in this study were Mobil-Leaf [Mobil Chemical Co.], wilt proof [Nursery Specialty Products] and XEF-4-3561 [Dow Corning Corp.]. The laboratory experiments indicated that a single anti-transpirant treatment can reduce the water loss from salt cedar by as much as 50% for several days and that the long term effectiveness of Mobil-Leaf is significantly better than that of the other two antitranspirants. None of the plants treated with Mobil-Leaf showed any discoloration or other physiological injury within a month after treatment. Field studies were conducted in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management at the BLM Evapotranspirometer Installation at Bernardo, New Mexico with Mobil-Leaf. The decrease in evapotranspiration from salt cedar observed in the field was less than that in the laboratory and current indications are that the resulting water savings was probably somewhat less than 30%. It is possible that the differences between laboratory in-field effect is due to a lack of uniformity and thoroughness of the spray covering.

**17a. Descriptors**

Antitranspirants, salt cedar, water consumption

**17b. Identifiers**

Bernardo, New Mexico

**17c. COWRR Field & Group****18. Availability****19. Security Class.  
(Report)****21. No. of  
Pages****20. Security Class.  
(Page)****22. Price****Send To:**WATER RESOURCES SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION CENTER  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240**Abstractor****Institution**

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## INTRODUCTION

The potential for water conservation and reallocation through reductions in transpiration is great because ninety-nine percent of the water absorbed from the soil by a plant is transpired into the atmosphere. In arid and semi-arid regions, actively growing plants with an adequate water supply (e.g. phreatophytes) will transpire a weight of water equal to their fresh leaf weight each hour. Phreatophytic vegetation in the Western United States covers about 16 million acres and transpires about 25 million acre feet of water each year. Salt cedar (Tamarix sp.) plants are estimated to cover over 1.3 million acres and to consume over 5 million acre feet of water per year (Robinson, 1965).

Transpiration reductions can be achieved in two general ways: (1) reduction of the transpiring surface by mechanical or chemical harvesting or eradication of the plants, and (2) reduction of the amount of water lost per unit leaf surface by treating the plants with chemical antitranspirants.

Mechanical and chemical destruction of vegetation along irrigation canals and on watersheds has been widely used. However, permanent eradication of phreatophytis is seldom achieved, and these methods often also cause undesirable side effects, such as soil erosion, leaching of nutrients from the soil, increased silting of the waterway, loss of wildlife habitat, and decreased aesthetic value.

Chemical antitranspirants offer the potential for achieving significant water savings without seriously altering the ecosystem. Experiments conducted over the past decade and a half have demonstrated that antitranspirants

can appreciably reduce water consumption by plants (see e.g. Gale and Hagan, 1966; Davenport, et al. 1969; Poljakoff-Mayber and Gale, 1972; Davies and Kozlowski, 1974). However, the results have varied widely depending on the chemicals and amounts used, the plant species, and the environmental conditions.

Metabolic antitranspirants, which reduce stomatal aperture, have been found to reduce water consumption appreciable for periods of a week or more. But some of them have proved toxic to a variety of herbaceous and woody plants (Davenport, et al., 1971; Mishra and Pradham, 1972; Kreith, et al., 1975). However, recent studies indicate that naturally-occurring antitranspirant compounds such as abscisic acid and all-trans-farnesol may have promise as commercial metabolic antitranspirants without causing undesirable side effects (Ogunkanmi, et al., 1974; Wellburn, et al., 1974).

Film-forming antitranspirants, which reduce transpiration by coating the leaf with thin, water-impervious film, have been found to be less toxic and to have a longer period of effectiveness than metabolic antitranspirants (Davies and Kozlowski, 1974; Kreith, et al., 1975). Again, however, reported results vary appreciably, depending upon (1) the plant species, (2) the antitranspirants and methods of application, and (3) the environmental conditions under which the plants were grown and the ambient environmental conditions at the time of antitranspirant application.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The objective of this study was to evaluate the potential of using chemical antitranspirants on phreatophyte communities to increase watershed runoff and streamflow. More specifically, the research included (1)

laboratory evaluation of the effects of the most promising antitranspirants currently available on transpiration and photosynthesis of Tamarix sp.

(2) phytotoxicity trials in the laboratory and in the field, and (3) field evaluation of one antitranspirant on Tamarix at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Evapotranspirometer Site at Bernardo, New Mexico.

In the summer of 1974 the original work plan was modified to include antitranspirant screening studies for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM is interested in the potential of using antitranspirants along roadsides in the intermountain west to conserve soil moisture, which could, in turn, maintain the vegetation in a green state for longer periods and reduce fire hazard during the latter part of the growing season. The immediate objective of our studies for the BLM was to evaluate in the laboratory the effects of two antitranspirants on transpiration and photosynthesis of several species representative of roadside vegetation.

For convenience, the "Results and Discussion" section of this report is divided into "BLM Studies" and "Phreatophyte Studies".

## METHODS

### Plant Culture

The sources of plant materials for both the BLM and phreatophyte studies are shown in Table I. Stock cultures were maintained in a greenhouse at ambient temperatures ranging from 15° to 35°C. Photoperiod was extended to 16 hours during the winter months. Experimental plants were grown in a Warren/Sherer model CEL 36-10 controlled environment chamber programmed for a 16 hour photoperiod and a 25°C day/15°C night thermal regime. Plants in the growth chamber were watered daily,

alternating between Hoagland's solution and tap water.

Table I. Sources of Plant Material

<u>Species</u>	<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Source</u>
<u>Achillea millifolium</u> L.	Yarrow	Vegetative clones collected at 5800' near Deer Lodge, Powell County, Montana
<u>Agropyron cristatum</u> (L.) Gaertn.	Crested wheatgrass	Seed collected from roadside, Interstate 80, Elk Mountain, Wyoming
<u>Elymus Canadensis</u> L.	Canada wild rye	Seeds collected from roadside, Deer Lodge, Montana
<u>Melilotus officinalis</u> (L.) Lam.	Yellow sweetclover	Seed purchased from Farmers Marketing Association, Denver Lot 14-305
<u>Tamarix pentandra</u> Pall.	Salt cedar	Cuttings obtained from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Site, Bernardo, New Mexico

#### Transpiration and Photosynthesis Measurements

Transpiration and net photosynthesis were measured with an open, gas exchange system similar to that described by Anderson and McNaughton (1973), but utilizing the plant cuvette described by Mooney, et al. (1971). Briefly, the plant top was sealed into the plexiglass cuvette through which air was circulated at a known flow rate. The net photosynthetic rate was determined by measuring the carbon dioxide concentrations of the air entering and leaving the cuvette with a Beckman 865 infrared gas analyzer. The infrared gas analyzer was calibrated daily against standard gases containing zero and 320 ppm carbon dioxide. The system was sensitive to carbon dioxide concentration changes of 1 - 2 parts per million.



The transpiration rate was determined by measuring the relative humidity of the air entering and leaving the chamber and calculating the amount of water added to the air stream. The relative humidity was determined with narrow range lithium chloride hydro-sensors (American Instrument Company, Silver Spring, Maryland) sensitive to relative humidity changes of 0.1 percent.

The accuracy of the transpiration measuring system was determined using a modification of the technique suggested by Tranquiliny and Caldwell (1972). The amount of water evaporating from an open plastic Petri dish base was measured gravimetrically and simultaneously with the gas exchange system. Paired results of ten trials at different cuvette temperatures and relative humidities agreed within 2%.

Cuvette temperature was maintained within 0.1°C by circulating an ethylene glycol solution through the cuvette heat exchanger from a constant temperature water bath. A fan within the cuvette provided for efficient heat exchange as well as excellent temperature control and prevented gradients in carbon dioxide or water vapor concentration. The cuvette temperature was measured with a thermistor and/or a copper-constantan thermocouple.

In the laboratory the plant was illuminated by one 500 watt quartz lamp (GE Q500 PAR56MFL) placed at a distance of 34 cm from the cuvette and one 150 watt tungsten shaded spotlight placed 15 cm from the side of the cuvette. Light in the cuvette (approximately 1/3 full sunlight) was near saturation for photosynthesis and above saturation for maximal stomatal opening for all species studies.

For the field studies, the cuvette was mounted on a heavy duty, TV tripod (Elevator Hi-Boy IV, Quick Set Inc., Northbrook, Illinois), which

can be adjusted to heights of up to 2.7 meters for use on shrub and tree branches. For measurements on salt cedar branches in the top of the canopy, each tripod leg was further extended with two one meter lengths 3.8 cm diameter plastic pipe telescoping on a wooden dowel. With this extension, the cuvette could be raised as high as 4.5 meters. The other components of the gas exchange system used in the field were housed in a small utility trailer. A nine meter umbilical cord containing water and air lines and thermocouple and thermistor wires coupled the cuvette to the measuring and recording components in the trailer. Cuvette illumination in the field was provided by full sunlight.

#### Laboratory Antitranspirant Experiments

A plant was removed from the controlled environment chamber, sealed into the cuvette, and illuminated until transpiration and net photosynthesis reached steady state values. The plant was then removed from the cuvette and sprayed to run off with antitranspirant, using a Binks Model 15 paint spray gun. The plant was then returned to the growth chamber to allow the antitranspirant to dry, and then was returned to the cuvette periodically for transpiration and photosynthetic determinations. Control plants were treated identically, except that they were sprayed with distilled water. All laboratory experiments were conducted at 25°C air temperature and a relative humidity of from 35 to 42% inside the cuvette.

#### Field Studies

Field studies were conducted at the United States Bureau of Reclamation Evapotranspirometer Installation at Bernardo, New Mexico, approximately 55 miles south of Albuquerque near the Rio Grande River.

At this site nine evapotranspirometer tanks, each 12 feet deep with a 1000 square foot surface, had been constructed in 1961-62. Each tank was lined with 1/16-inch butyl rubber and after construction, native soil was returned to each tank in as near the original profile as possible.

Presently, four tanks are planted with Tamarix, two with Russian olive, two with salt grass, and one measures evaporation from bare ground. The surrounding area, which was originally cleared to facilitate construction of the tanks, was planted with Tamarix to eliminate any oasis effect.

Evapotranspiration from each tank is determined by measuring the amount of water which must be added to maintain a constant water level. The water supply to each tank is regulated by a solenoid valve controlled by a suspended probe assembly and relay. As the water level falls below the lower probe, the relay is de-energized, completing the electrical circuit opening the solenoid valve. As the water table reaches the upper probe, the relay is energized and the valve closes. The amount of water added is measured by standard water meter to the nearest one-tenth.

Tamarix plants were planted on the tanks and surrounding area at a density of 1 plant per square foot, or 100 plants per evapotranspirometer, which was typical of the undisturbed Tamarix in the area. Our studies were confined to tanks 4, 5, and 6 which have similar Tamarix stands. Water consumption on the fourth Tamarix tank (Number 3) was too low to serve as a valid control.

Evapotranspirometer Number 6 served as a control for all studies. Number 4 was sprayed with 15 liters of 10% Mobileaf on 16 June 1975 and 17 liters of 15% Mobileaf on 24 June 1975. Tank number 5 was sprayed with 18.5 liters of 15% Mobileaf on 18 June 1975. The results of the second spraying of tank 4 were not available for inclusion in this report.

Antitranspirant was applied in the field with a KWH 66 Power Knapsack Mist Blower. In the first application on tank 4, the antitranspirant was applied primarily by spraying from the top of a 14-foot ladder which was moved around the periphery. In subsequent sprayings, individual plants were sprayed from top to bottom at close range with the operator standing on the ground, then the canopy was sprayed from the ladder top on the tank periphery.

Spray coverage was evaluated by two methods. Thirty-two paper tags, each with a microscope cover slip glued to it, were hung by strings at approximately 0.5, 1.5, 2.7, and 4 meters height on eight plants on each evapotranspirometer that was sprayed with antitranspirant. After spraying when the droplets had dried, the tags were collected for later evaluation of spray spattered density. Coverage was also evaluated on a random sample of twigs that were air freighted to the University of California, Davis, for scanning electron microscope cathode luminescence studies. These studies are being completed by co-workers at the University of California, Davis, and are not available for inclusion in this report.

Field gas exchange studies were conducted on evapotranspirometers 5 and 6. The end of an intact branch 10 to 15 cm in length was sealed into the cuvette and steady state transpiration and net photosynthetic rates in full sunlight measured. Prior to spraying, steady state values were measured on 8 branches of plants on evapotranspirometer 5 and 7 branches on number 6, the latter serving as controls. During spraying, two of the eight branches on tank 5 were covered with plastic bags, to also serve as controls. When first measured, each branch was carefully tagged so that the same amount of plant material would be present when the branch was returned to the cuvette for periodic measurements after spraying. Green

leaf material was harvested after the last measurement had been taken on a branch, and also fresh and dry weight were determined so that rates could be compared on a unit plant material basis.

#### Antitranspirants

The antitranspirants included in the study are shown in Table II. A literature review, and discussions with co-workers at the University of California, Davis, indicated that these were the most promising film type antitranspirants currently commercially available. They are also representative of the different types of chemicals used as film-forming antitranspirants.

Table II. Antitranspirants Included in the Study

<u>Antitranspirant</u>	<u>Type of Material</u>	<u>Concentrations Used</u>	<u>Manufacturer</u>
Mobileaf*	Wax emulsion in water	5-16.5% v/v, (stock solution diluted in water)	Mobil Chemical Company P.O. Box 26683 Richmond, VA 23261
Wilt Pruf*	Beta pinene emulsion in water	16.5% v/v, (1:5 dilution of stock solution in water)	Nursery Specialty Products 410 Greenwich Ave. Greenwich, CT 06830
XEF-4-3561	Siloxane emulsion in water	5% siloxanes (1:9 dilution of stock solution in water)	Dow Corning Corporation Midland, MI 48640

\*FDA approved for direct application to edible crops.

#### Phytotoxicity Trials

On 27 May 1975, 5, 10, and 15% concentrations of Mobileaf were sprayed on Tamarix branches at the Bernardo evapotranspirometer site. Two branches received a heavy application (thorough drenching) and two received a light or application at each concentration. The branches selected were exposed

to full sunlight. Periodic observations revealed no apparent discoloration within a month after treatment. Studies conducted out of doors on growth chamber-reared Tamarix plants at Boulder, Colorado, during late May and early June similarly showed no apparent phytotoxicity at similar spray concentrations, but ambient temperatures at Boulder were cool and rains were frequent during the tests.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### BLM Studies

XEF (5% solution) reduced transpiration and photosynthesis of Achillea Millefolium 40-60% within a few hours after spraying; however, both rates returned nearly to their original values within two days (Figure 1). Mobileaf (10% v/v solution) produced only a 10-30% reduction in transpiration and photosynthesis of A. millefolium, but at that concentration the Mobileaf did not appear to cover the surface well. A mixture (50:50 v/v) of 5% XEF and 10% Mobileaf produced about an 80% reduction of both transpiration and photosynthesis of A. millefolium, but also its effectiveness decayed within two days. Coverage of the finely dissected, pubescent Yarrow leaves appeared to be enhanced when using the mixture of antitranspirant compared to Mobileaf alone.

Because the XEF seemed to achieve larger initial reductions while Mobileaf appeared more persistent, we decided to conduct further experiments with both antitranspirants and a mixture of the two. The concentration of Mobileaf in subsequent experiments was increased to 16.5% (1:5 v/v dilution in distilled water), the concentration recommended by the manufacturer for treating tobacco transplants. The antitranspirant mixture in subsequent experiments was prepared by diluting stock Mobileaf 1:5 v/v in the 5% XEF solution.

Transpiration rates of Agropyron cristatum plants sprayed with 5% XEF were indistinguishable from controls after 24 hours (Figure 2). The pattern for photosynthesis was very similar. Because of the rapid decay of antitranspirant effectiveness of XEF on both Achillea millefolium and Agropyron cristatum, it seemed highly doubtful that this antitranspirant would be suitable for meeting the objectives of this project. Thus, no further trials with XEF on the herbaceous species were conducted.

Mobileaf (16.5%) reduced transpiration of A. cristatum plants 40-50% (Figure 3). The parallel slopes for the control and treated plants after 30 hours shows that most of the apparent decay of antitranspirant effectiveness is due to growth, i.e., the addition of new leaf surface. Note that control plants were adding biomass so rapidly that transpiration rates nearly doubled in four days. This rapid growth was typical of the four herbaceous plants studied, and emphasizes the necessity to correct antitranspirant data for the growth of controls in order to obtain an accurate picture of duration of effectiveness.

In Figure 4, the transpiration data are the same as those plotted in Figure 3, but the rates have been corrected for the growth of controls. The parallel reductions of transpiration and photosynthesis indicates that the antitranspirant film imposes a similar barrier to the diffusion of carbon dioxide and water vapor. It seems probable that the film is essentially impervious to both gases, and the magnitude of the reduction in rates is indicative of the extent of leaf surface coverage.

Initial reductions in transpiration and photosynthesis of A. cristatum treated with the Mobileaf/XEF mixture were greater than with Mobileaf alone (cf. Figures 4 and 5). However, effectiveness appeared to decay more rapidly with the Mobileaf/XEF mixture. Similar patterns were found

in experiments on Elymus canadensis plants (Figures 6 and 7); but there was no doubt that effectiveness of the antitranspirant mixture decayed more rapidly than that of Mobileaf alone. After nine days, rates of the Mobileaf/XEF treated plants were indistinguishable from controls, whereas rates of Mobileaf treated plants were only ca. 60% of controls (Figure 6).

We repeated the experiments on Achillea millefolium, comparing the effects of the Mobileaf/XEF mixture to 16.5% Mobileaf. The results were essentially identical to those for A. cristatum and E. canadensis. The mixture resulted in a larger initial decrease in rates but effectiveness decayed more rapidly than with Mobileaf only. The short-term enhancement of effectiveness appeared to be more than offset by the long-term reduction of effectiveness.

Twelve days after treatment, transpiration and photosynthesis of A. millefolium plants treated with 16.5% Mobileaf were still significantly lower than controls (Table III). Average transpiration rate of treated plants was 51% that of controls, while net photosynthesis of treated plants was 62% of the control rates.

Table III. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of Achillea millefolium plants 12 days after spraying with 16.5 Mobileaf or distilled water (controls).

Transpiration g H <sub>2</sub> O/g dry weight leaf · hr		Photosynthesis mg CO <sub>2</sub> /g dry weight leaf · hr	
Mobileaf	Controls		
7.7	3.5	53.8	31.8
7.3	4.4	43.1	31.2
<u>6.6</u>	3.6	<u>48.1</u>	27.7
$\bar{x} = 7.2$	<u>3.3</u>	$\bar{x} = 48.3$	<u>28.8</u>
	$\bar{x} = 3.7$		$\bar{x} = 29.9$



t = 9.4 with 5 d.f.

t = 6.5 with 5 d.f.

P < 0.001

P < 0.01

Mobileaf (16.5%) and Wilt Pruf (16.5%) resulted in similar initial reductions of transpiration of Melilotus officinalis, but long-term effectiveness was significantly better with Mobileaf (Figure 8).

Figure 8 points out two difficulties encountered in our antitranspirant research methods. First, there are practical limits on the amounts of plant materials that can be enclosed in the cuvette without causing mutual shading of leaves or restricted air circulation. Initially, one must have enough plant material in the cuvette for accurate rate measurements after antitranspirant treatment. Because of rapid growth, the M. officinalis plants had practically outgrown the capacity of the gas exchange system in two weeks. From Figure 8, one can infer that the average leaf biomass of control plants had tripled in the 14-day experiment.

Secondly, in longer experiments differences in the growth rates of individual plants become a problem. Note in Figure 8 that the standard error of both treated and control plant means becomes greater with time. This differential growth, especially of controls, makes it difficult to evaluate long-term effectiveness because antitranspirant effects may be obscured by the large sample variance. The solution to this problem, of course, is a larger sample; but one is again practically limited to measuring about eight plants per day with one gas-exchange system.

Although in Figure 8 transpiration appears to be reduced in treated vs. control plants on day 14, there was no significant differences in absolute rates of transpiration or photosynthesis (Table IV).

Table IV. Transpiration and photosynthesis of Melilotus officinalis plants 14 days after spraying with 16.5% Mobileaf, 16.5% Wilt Pruf, or distilled water (controls).

Transpiration g H <sub>2</sub> O/g dry weight leaf · hr		
Mobileaf	Wilt Pruf	Controls
8.9	10.8	11.7
9.3	11.0	10.7
7.4	9.5	7.8
<u>7.9</u>	<u>8.2</u>	<u>7.9</u>
$\bar{x} = 8.3$	$\bar{x} = 9.9$	$\bar{x} = 9.5$

F = 1.2 with 9, 2 d.f.

P > 0.1 n.s.

Net Photosynthesis mg CO <sub>2</sub> /g dry weight leaf · hr		
Mobileaf	Wilt Pruf	Controls
64.4	69.9	81.7
66.7	74.8	77.2
46.2	65.4	63.1
<u>55.8</u>	<u>60.6</u>	<u>51.3</u>
$\bar{x} = 58.3$	$\bar{x} = 67.7$	$\bar{x} = 68.3$

F = 1.2 with 9, 2 d.f.

P > 0.1 n.s.

## Conclusions and Recommendations: BLM Study

The results indicate that Mobileaf, Wilt Pruf, or similar antitranspirant formulations will effectively reduce transpiration of herbaceous species in the laboratory. Antitranspirant effectiveness, when corrected for growth of controls, appears to be satisfactory for 10-14 days after spraying. Obviously, because of rapid growth of new leaf area more frequent application would be necessary to achieve maximum water savings. This was found to be true for both dicotyledonous and monocotyledonous species.

The similarity of antitranspirant effects on all four species suggest that similar laboratory results could be expected with most herbaceous range or roadside species. It would be difficult, however, to achieve as thorough spray coverage in the field. Thus, the magnitude of transpiration reduction reported here probably indicates the maximum that can be achieved in the field.

An antitranspirant which would also function as a growth retardant, or a retardant/antitranspirant mixture, would be advantageous for meeting the BLM objectives. Several commercial growth retardants have been reported to have antitranspirant properties. We have obtained samples of two (Alar, a UNIROYAL product and Atrazine from CIBA-GEIGY Corporation) for laboratory trials singly and in combination with film-forming antitranspirants.

We would recommend the initiation of a small scale field study to attempt to quantify the magnitude of actual water savings along roadways by various antitranspirant treatments, including mowing. Using standard, inexpensive gravimetric soil moisture determination, it should be relatively easy to make quantitative estimates of the actual amount of

water saved. Comparing soil moisture on clipped and unclipped roadside stands should indicate the maximum potential for water savings and provide a good baseline to which values from areas treated with chemical antitranspirants could be compared. The relatively homogeneous extensive stands or reseeded vegetation along intermountain roadways provide a unique outdoor laboratory for such experiments.

#### Phreatophyte Studies

Initial transpiration reductions in growth-chamber grown *Tamarix* plants treated with either XEF (5%) or Mobileaf (16.5%) were similar, but, as with the herbaceous species, XEF effectiveness was for more short-lived (Figure 9). Duration of antitranspirant effectiveness in Mobileaf-treated plants appeared to be better than that observed among the herbaceous species (compare Figures 3-8 with Figure 9). After six days, transpiration of the treated plants was still less than 55% of the original rates. Based on these results and discussions with co-workers at the University of California, Davis, Mobileaf was selected for use in the field studies at Bernardo, New Mexico.

Water consumption measured on Bernardo evapotranspirometers 4, 5, and 6 for the period with the exception of tanks 5 and 6 on 16 June, day to day variations among values for the three tanks tend to be parallel, indicating that the vegetation on the three tanks responded similarly to changing environmental conditions and that the measuring system recorded those responses. These data suggest that the integrity of the evapotranspirometers is good, but the water consumption data also raise some serious questions. Presumably, if all other factors were equal, the evapotranspirometers would respond identically to changing environmental

conditions. This obviously is not the case. For example, the decrease in water consumption on 17 June was due to afternoon cloudiness and high humidity on 16 June. But, the magnitude of the decrease on 17 June and following increase on 18 June was very different, especially comparing tanks 5 and 6. In addition, the percent of the total water consumed in 24 hours which was consumed during the night was usually higher on tank 6 than on 5 or 4 (Table V). There is no apparent reason for this difference, but it does indicate that there may be significant differences in the performance of the evapotranspirometers.

Table V. Comparison of "day" vs. "night" water consumption on evapotranspirometers 4, 5, and 6

Gallons of Water Consumed				
<u>Evapotranspirometer</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>"Day"</u> <u>08:30-18:30</u>	<u>"Night"</u> <u>18:30-80:30</u>	<u>% "Night"</u>
4	June 14-15	93	30	24
	15-16	96	44	32
	16-17	79	31	25
	17-18	75	41	35
	18-19	87	57	39
5	June 14-15	128	53	29
	15-16	137	69	34
	16-17	97	40	29
	17-18	104	44	30
	18-19	107	66	38
6	June 14-15	130	71	35
	15-16	116	77	40
	16-17	109	60	36
	17-18	125	77	38
	18-19	129	100	44

The arrows in Figure 10 indicate the time of application of anti-transpirant. Tank 4 was sprayed with 10% Mobileaf between 9:00 and 10:00 AM on 16 June. The decrease in water consumption immediately

following spraying was probably due to afternoon cloudiness and high relative humidity. The data for the following days show a pattern very similar to that of the control tank (Number 6). No effect of the antitranspirant application was apparent in the evapotranspirometer data.

Tank 5 was sprayed with 15% Mobileaf on 18 June. Again, no reduction in transpiration (water consumption) of the same order of magnitude expected from the laboratory results was found. The data suggest the possibility of some antitranspirant effect from 20-24 June. During the early part of the period, consumption on Tanks 5 and 6 were very similar. The large drop on Number 5 on the 17th was probably not due to spraying and it is not known. Whether the antitranspirant treatment was a factor in maintaining the lower rate of consumption on tank Number 5. If one assumes that the difference between the consumptions of Tanks 5 and 6 for the period 20-24 June was entirely due to the antitranspirant, one could infer a maximum reduction in consumption of about a 30%. It seems doubtful that the difference was entirely due to the antitranspirant. The best interpretation is that the resulting water savings was probably something less than 30%.

Transpiration rates of individual branches after spraying, measured with the gas exchange system, are shown in Figure 11. None of the five sprayed branches showed a transpiration reduction of the same order of magnitude as was observed in the laboratory; initial reductions ranged from near zero to about 30 percent. Water consumption rates of sprayed branches were consistently lower than those of controls for six days after spraying, leaving little doubt that there was some antitranspirant effect. Absolute transpiration and photosynthetic rates on 24 June were significantly lower among treated than among control plants (Table VI).

Table VI. Comparison of transpiration and net photosynthetic rates of sprayed vs. control Tamarix branches 6 days after spraying at the Bernardo evapotranspirometer site.

Transpiration (g H <sub>2</sub> O/g dry weight leaves · hr)		Photosynthesis (mg CO <sub>2</sub> /g dry weight leaves · hr)	
Sprayed	Control	Sprayed	Control
2.7	4.5	10.7	15.0
2.5	3.4	10.1	13.8
2.7	3.5	11.6	13.2
2.3	3.5	9.8	14.1
<u>2.4</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>10.7</u>	<u>14.0</u>
$\bar{x} = 2.5$	$\bar{x} = 3.5$	$\bar{x} = 10.6$	$\bar{x} = 14.0$
t = 2.48 with 7 d.f. P < 0.05		t = 7.17 with 7 d.f. P < 0.001	

It should be noted that 2 of the control branches were on the sprayed tank (branches 5-6 and 5-11 in Figure 11). These were covered during spraying. The data for these branches is similar to the control branches in Tank 6.

It is encouraging that there was no large discrepancy between the evapotranspirometer results and the gas exchange results. Both suggest a transpiration reduction of somewhat less than 30%, and the gas exchange measurements indicate clearly that despite considerable "environmental noise" such a reduction can be detected in the field with an adequate sample size.

After several days of gas exchange measurements in the field it became obvious that the Tamarix plants were behaving quite differently than laboratory reared ones. Some appeared to have high transpiration and low photosynthesis rates, while in others the opposite was observed. This suggested a difference in stomatal resistance among plants. Water vapor diffusing from a leaf encounters two major resistances, a stomatal resistance ( $r_g$ ) which is dependent upon stomatal pore size, and a

boundary layer resistance ( $r_b$ ) which is dependent upon wind or turbulence at the leaf surface (here we will ignore cuticular resistance). Carbon dioxide diffusing into the leaf encounters  $r_b$  and  $r_s$  and a third resistance at the mesophyll ( $r_m$ ) which is a resistance to transport from the mesophyll surface to the site of carboxylation at the chloroplast. Since the resistances are in series, an increase in  $r_s$  (decrease in stomatal aperture) is expected to reduce transpiration proportionately more than photosynthesis. Thus, different ratios of photosynthesis to transpiration, which we shall refer to as water use efficiency, indicate different stomatal resistance.

Water use efficiency values for all the individual branch measurements made at Bernardo show a definite increase in the afternoon, indicating partial stomatal closure (Figure 12). Thus, it is apparent that the Tamarix plants, growing with a constant water supply, are closing their stomata and reducing transpiration during the afternoon of a typical June day. Such closure could be in response to one or a combination of three factors: (1) plant water stress, (2) high ambient temperatures, and (3) low relative humidity. During the field study, afternoon air temperatures were usually between 32 and 37°C, with relative humidity varying between 10 and 15%.

In an attempt to assess the magnitude of the afternoon depression of transpiration, steady-state measurements of transpiration and photosynthesis at 30°C were made on three Tamarix branches during the morning or early afternoon and were then repeated during the latter part of the same day. Afternoon transpiration reductions ranged from 17 to 43% (Table VII) and corresponding increases in water use efficiency were observed.



Table VII. Transpiration, photosynthesis, and water use efficiency of three Tamarix branches at different times of day, 23 June 1975, Bernardo, New Mexico

Plant	Time	Net Photosynthesis	Transpiration	Water Use Efficiency
		(mg CO <sub>2</sub> /g dry wt · hr)	(g H <sub>2</sub> O/g dry wt · hr)	$\frac{\text{Net Photosynthesis}}{\text{Transpiration}} \times 10^{-3}$
6-3	10:00AM	15.4	3.8	0.41
	2:30PM	14.0	3.2	0.44
6-4	11:35AM	13.9	3.3	0.43
	3:15PM	11.5	1.8	0.62
6-5	12:45PM	11.2	2.6	0.44
	4:15PM	11.0	1.7	0.65

#### Conclusions and Recommendations: Phreatophyte Studies

Laboratory transpiration reductions and antitranspirant persistence with Mobileaf on Tamarix appeared very satisfactory. Reductions obtained in the field were not as large as in laboratory tests, but it was possible to show an antitranspirant effect with the gas exchange studies. Six days after antitranspirant application transpiration of sprayed branches averaged 70% of that of controls.

It is possible that the difference between laboratory and field effects is due to a lack of uniformity and thoroughness of spray coverage. It is very difficult to achieve as thorough of coverage in the field even with a hand-held sprayer. Under the high temperatures and low humidities encountered, some of the spray droplets may have evaporated before touching plant material. Coverage appeared to be enhanced by using a slower engine speed resulting in larger droplets during the final spraying. A study of application techniques to determine the best droplet size is needed. It is also possible that coverage would be enhanced if spraying could be completed at night or during the very early morning hours when evaporative

demand are lower.

More information on the physiological ecology of Tamarix is sorely needed. Studies should be initiated to determine the cause and mechanisms involved in the afternoon depression of the transpiration. If the mechanisms were understood, it might be possible to take advantage of the natural processes to reduce water consumption. Information on diurnal cycles in gas exchange rates is needed to facilitate the interpretation of data collected after antitranspirant application.

Field studies should be initiated to compare water consumption by various phreatophyte species. It was found in this study that salt cedars do not transpire at a potential rate all day. It should be ascertained if this is generally true of phreatophytes. At present, two evapotranspirometers at Bernardo are planted with Russian Olive. Water consumption on those tanks is double that of the Tamarix tanks. This suggests that it might be advantageous to have Tamarix present rather than another phreatophyte.

The field studies indicate that our knowledge of the physiology and ecology is insufficient for the interpretation of antitranspirant field trials. A better understanding of these should be of fundamental use in any future phreatophyte management program.

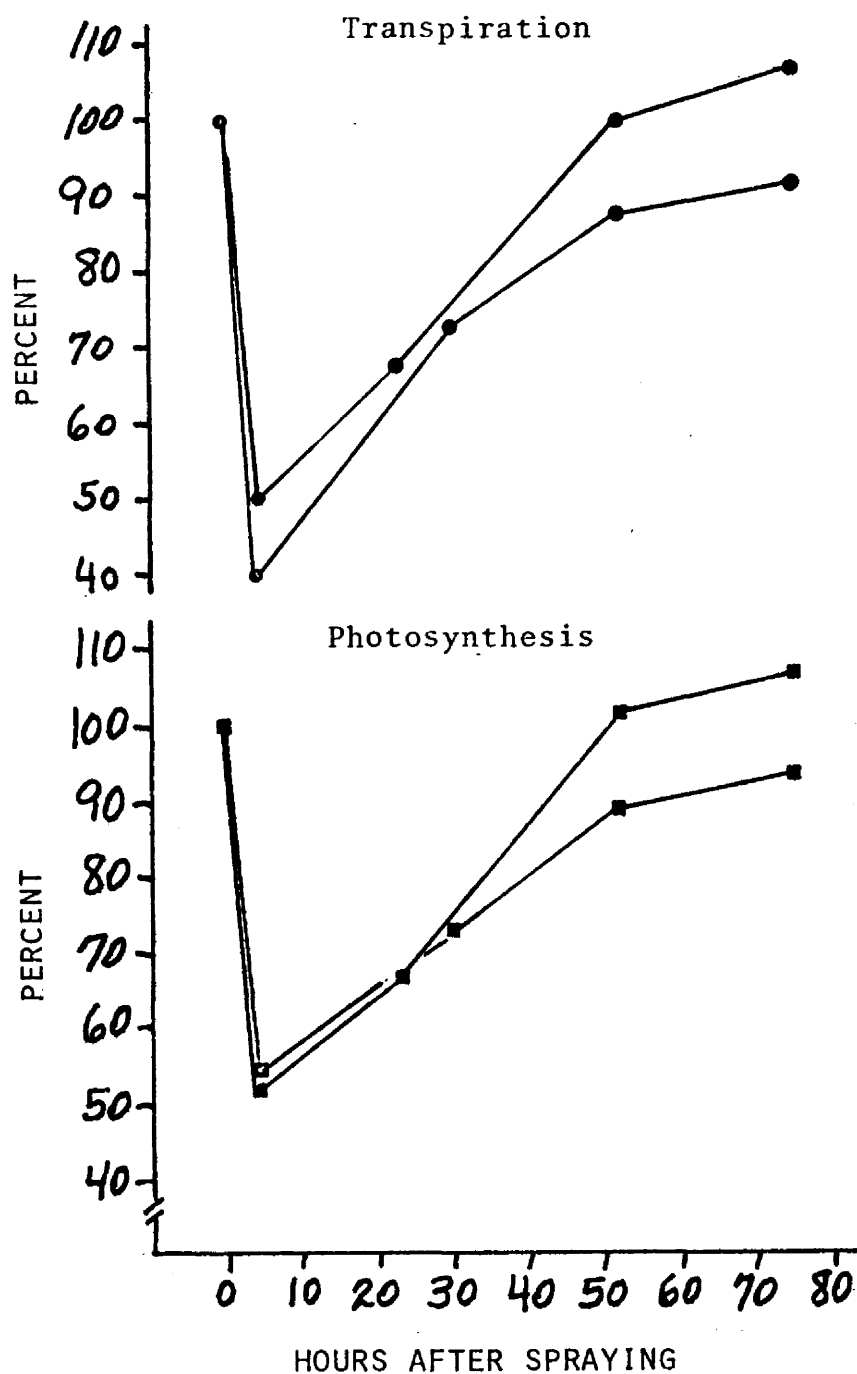


Figure 1. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of *Achillea millefolium* plants sprayed with a 5% solution of XEF-4-3561. Rates are expressed as percentages of the steady state rates just prior to spraying (time zero).

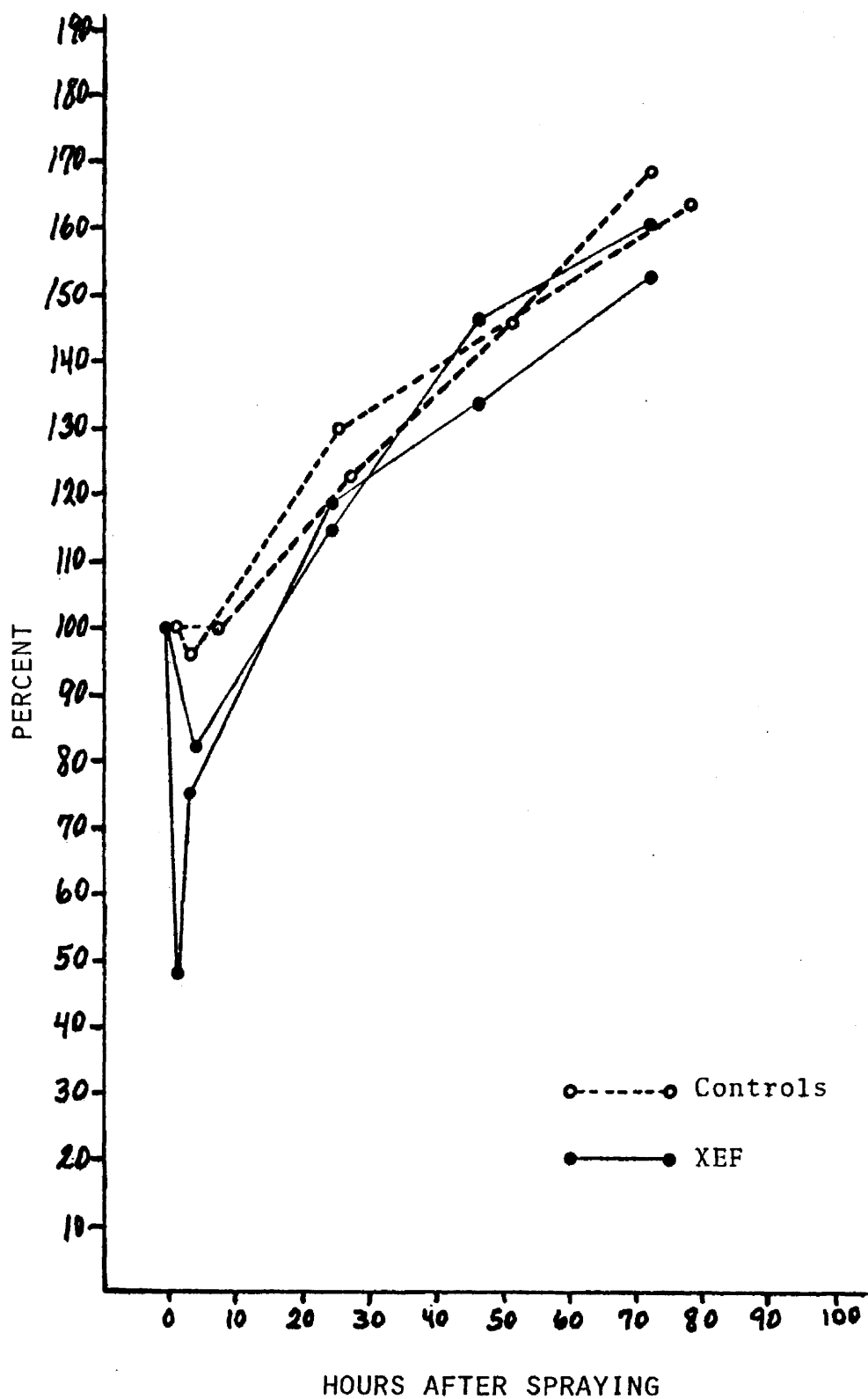


Figure 2. Transpiration of *Agropyron cristatum* plants sprayed with 5% XEF-4-3561, compared to control plants sprayed with distilled water. Rates are expressed as percentages of the rates just prior to spraying (time zero).

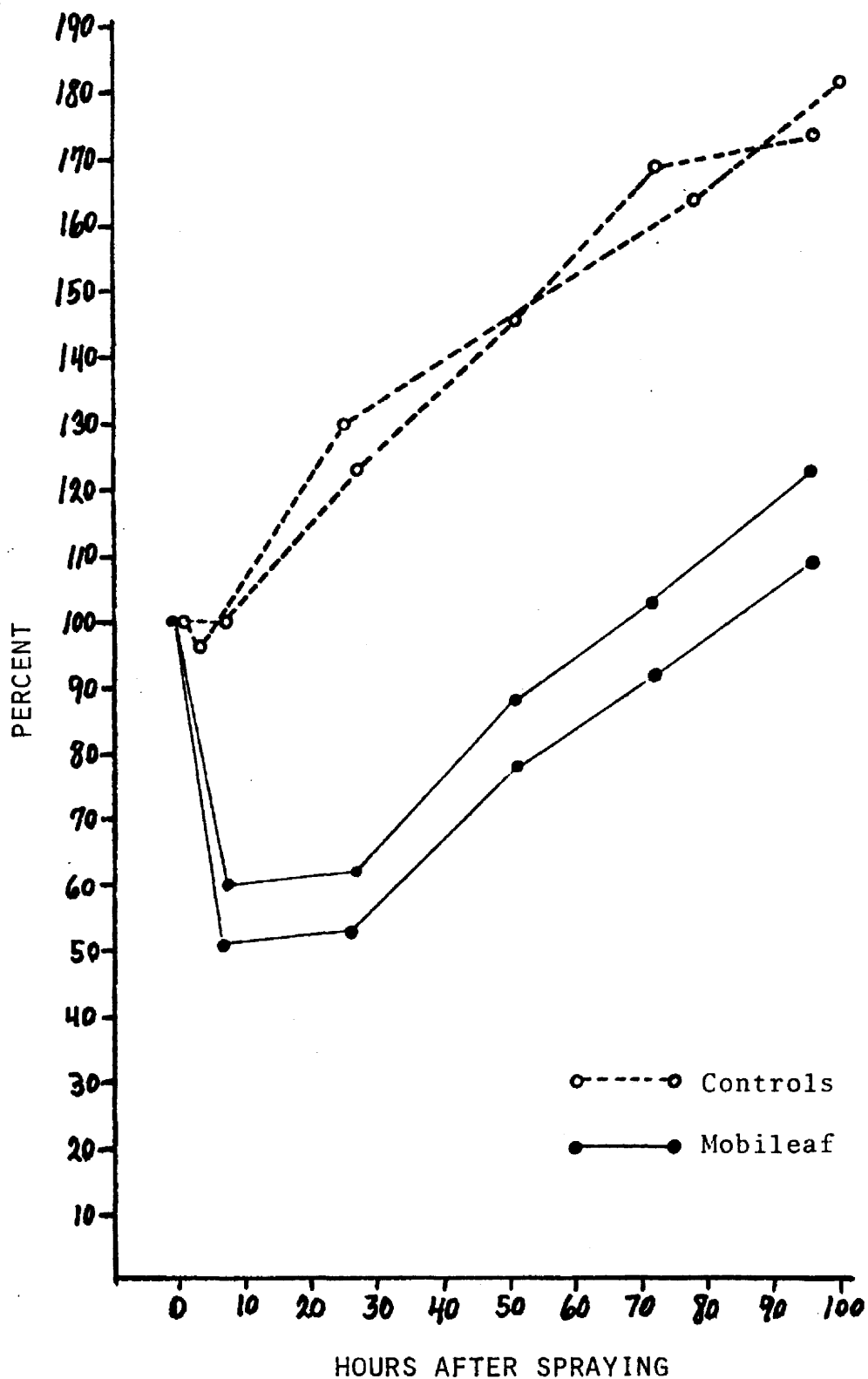


Figure 3. Transpiration of *Agropyron cristatum* plants sprayed with 16.5% Mobileaf, compared to control plants sprayed with distilled water. Rates are expressed as percentages of the rates just prior to spraying (time zero).

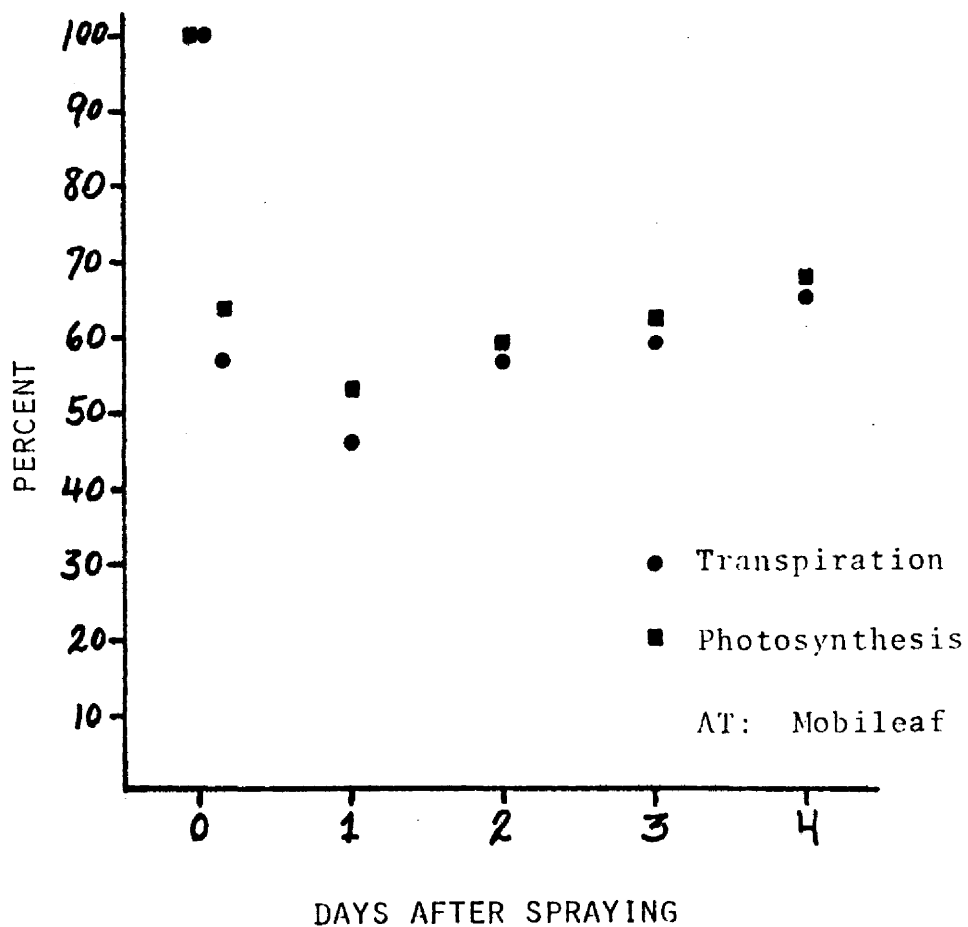


Figure 4. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of *Agropyron cristatum* plants sprayed with Mobileaf (1:5 v/v in distilled water). Rates are expressed as average percentages of the rates of control plants sprayed with distilled water. Each point is the average of two treated plants corrected for the average of two controls.

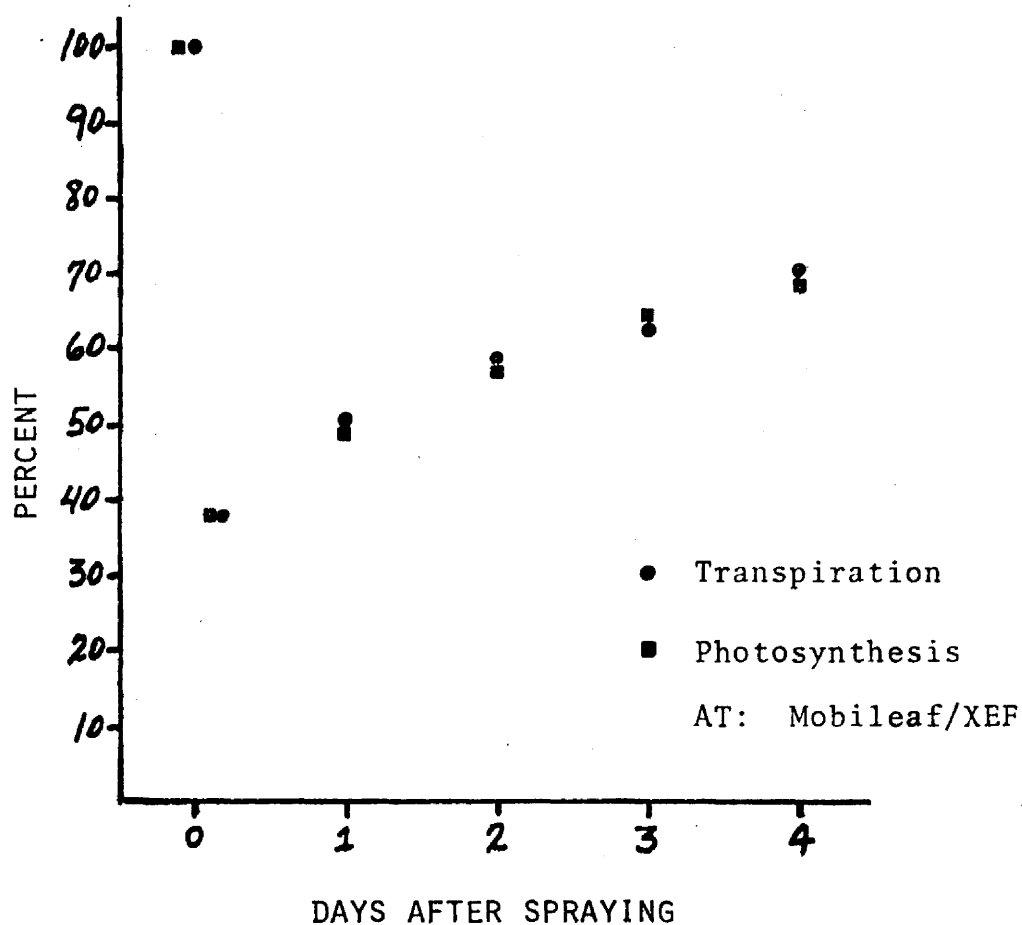


Figure 5. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of *Agropyron cristatum* plants sprayed with a mixture (1:5 v/v) of Mobileaf and 5% XEF-4-3561. Rates are expressed as average percentages of the rates of control plants sprayed with distilled water. Each point is the average of two treated plants corrected for the average of two controls.

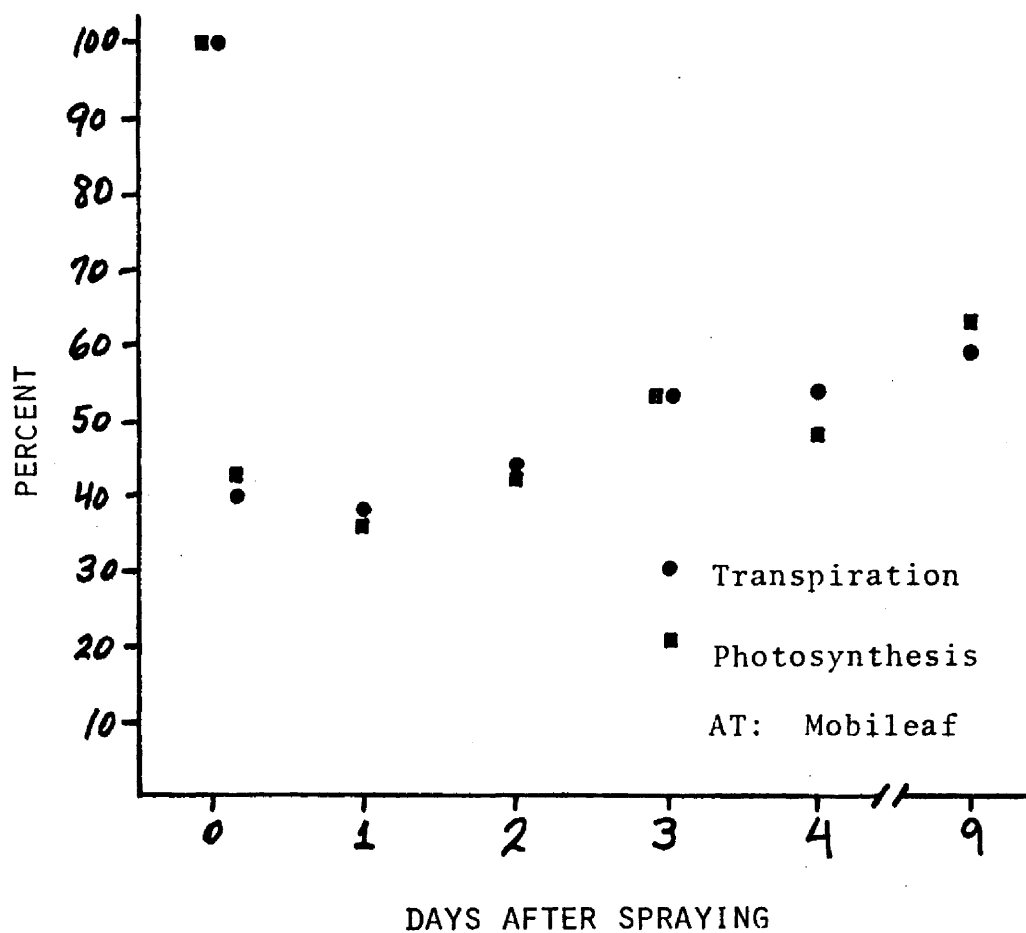


Figure 6. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of *Elymus canadensis* plants sprayed with Mobileaf (1:5 v/v in distilled water). Rates are expressed as average percentages of the rates of control plants sprayed with distilled water. Each point is the average of two treated plants corrected for the average of four controls.



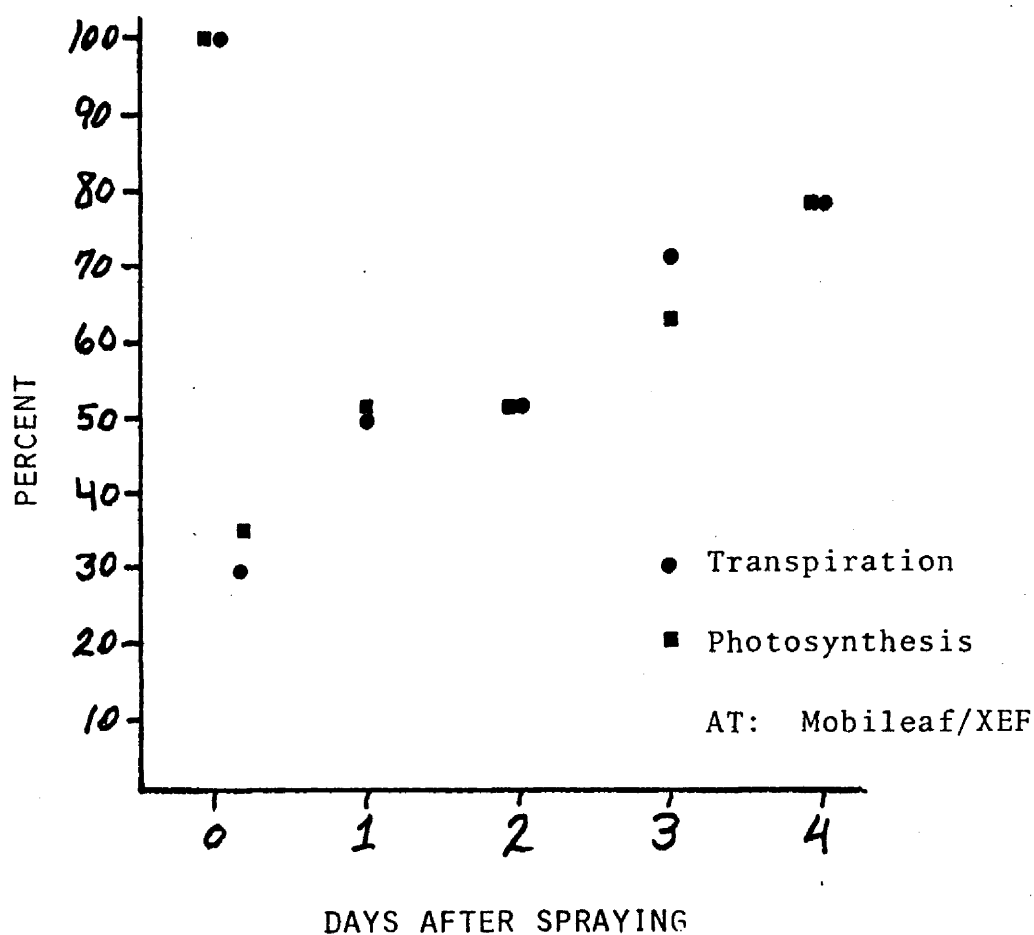


Figure 7. Transpiration and net photosynthesis of *Elymus canadensis* plants sprayed with a mixture (1:5 v/v) of Mobileaf and 5% XEF-4-3561. Rates are expressed as average percentages of the rates of control plants sprayed with distilled water. Each point is the average of two treated plants corrected for the average of four controls.

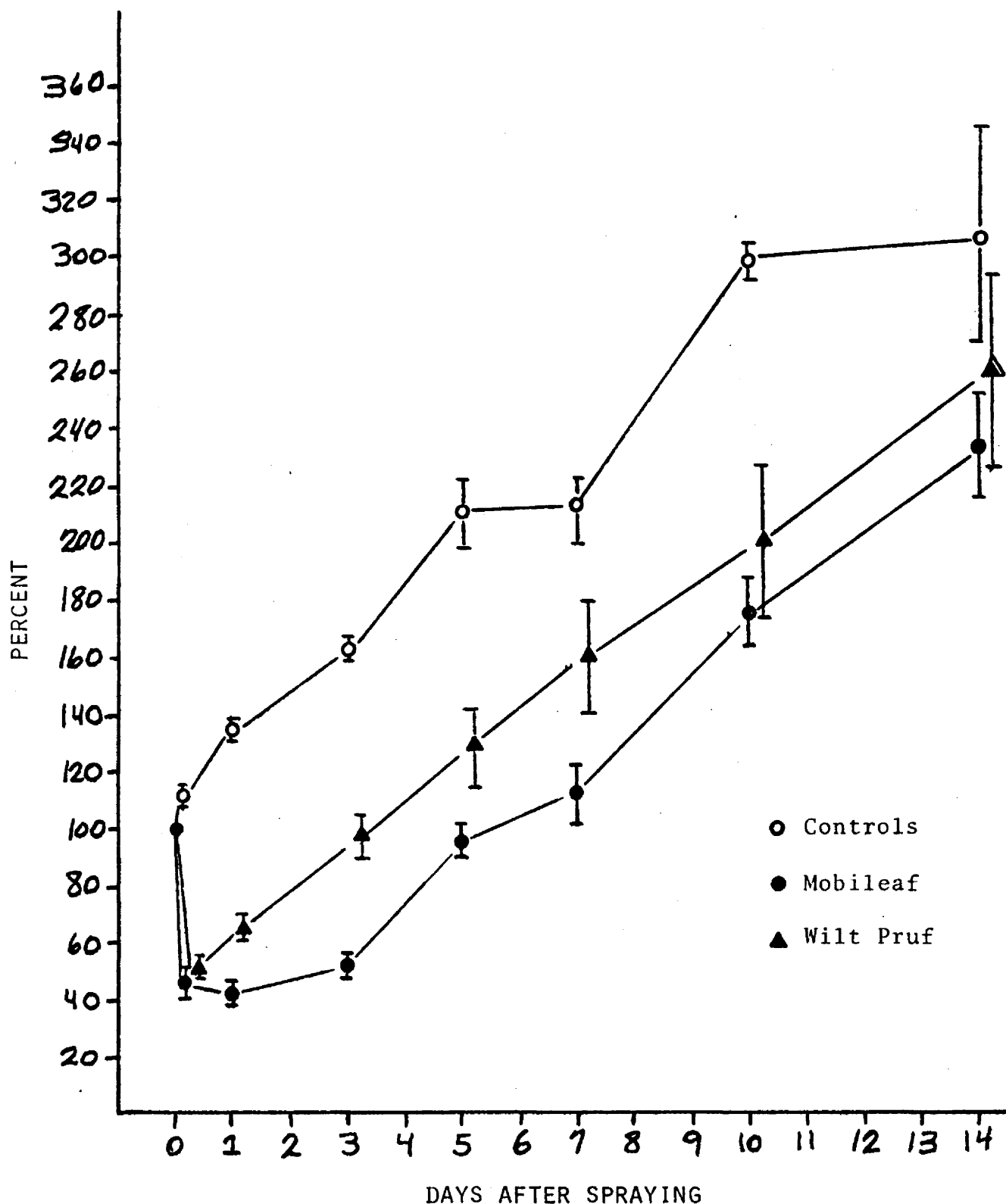


Figure 8. Transpiration of *Melilotus officinalis* plants sprayed with 16.5% Mobileaf, compared to control plants sprayed with distilled water. Rates are expressed as average percentages of the rates just prior to spraying (time zero). Each point is the mean of four plants; the vertical lines indicate standard errors.

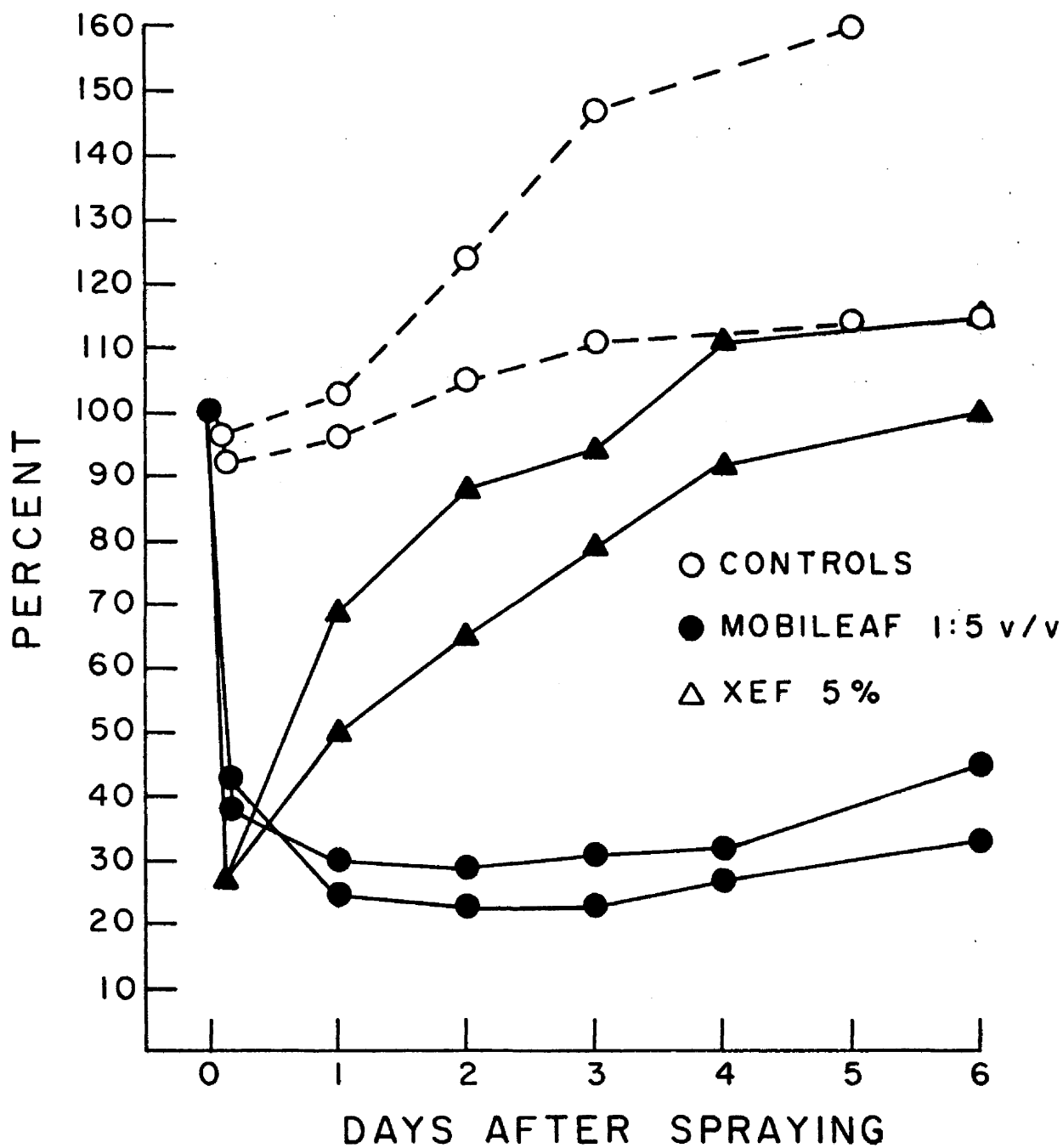


Figure 9. Transpiration of *Tamarix pentandra* plants sprayed with 16.5% Mobileaf or 5% XEF-4-3561. Rates are expressed as percentages of the steady state rates just prior to spraying (time zero).

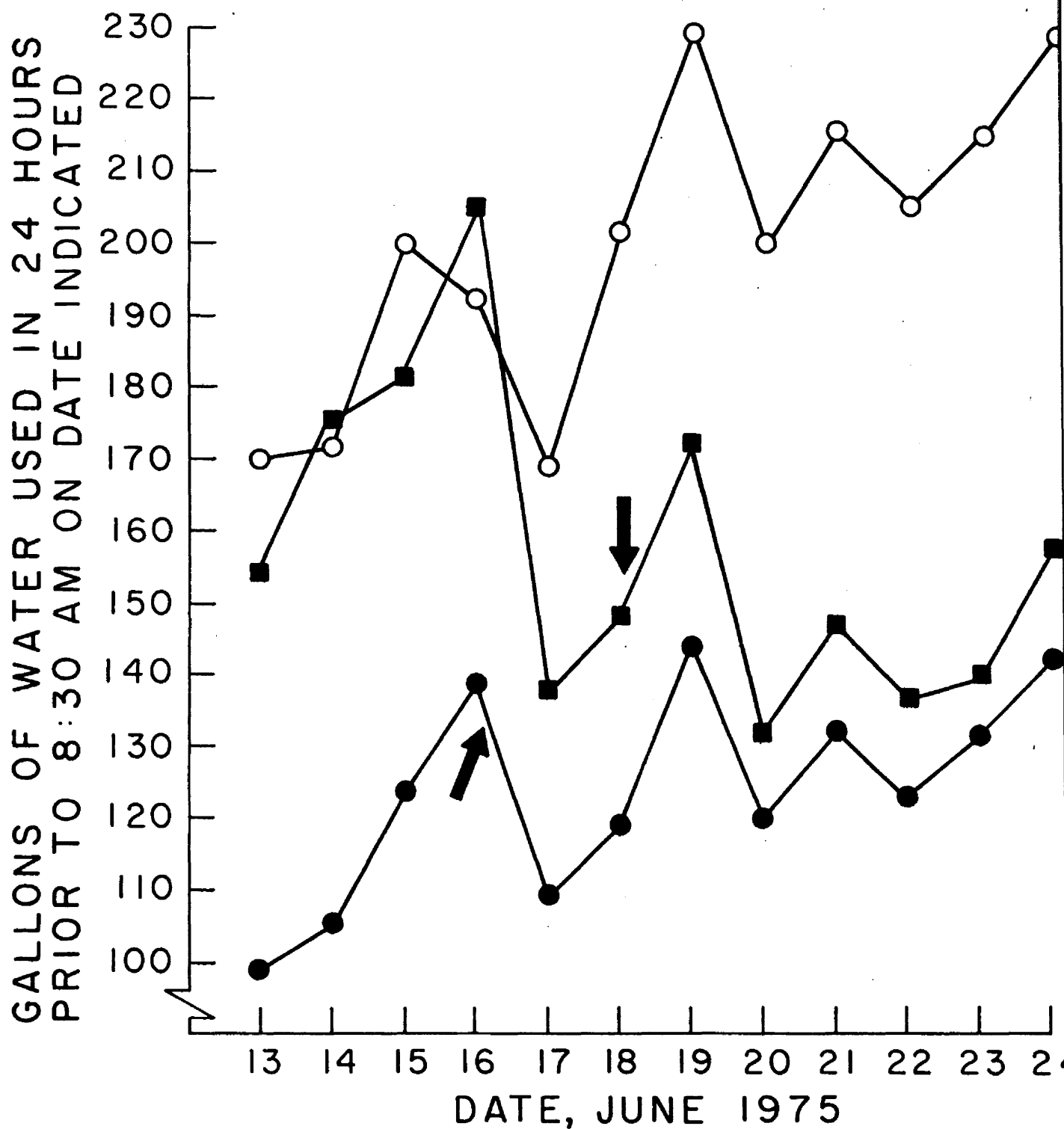


Figure 10. Water consumption on evapotranspirometers 4, 5, and 6 from 13 to 24 June 1975. Arrows indicate application of antitranspirant (see METHODS, Field Studies for Details).

Figure 11. Transpiration of individual branches sprayed with 15% Mobileaf compared to control branches. Rates are expressed as average percentages of the steady state rates measured on the day prior to spraying. Anti-transpirant was applied at time zero. Subsequent measurements were made at the same time of day as original measurements. Branches with "5" as the first numeral were from evapotranspirometer 5, those with "6" from evapotranspirometer 6.

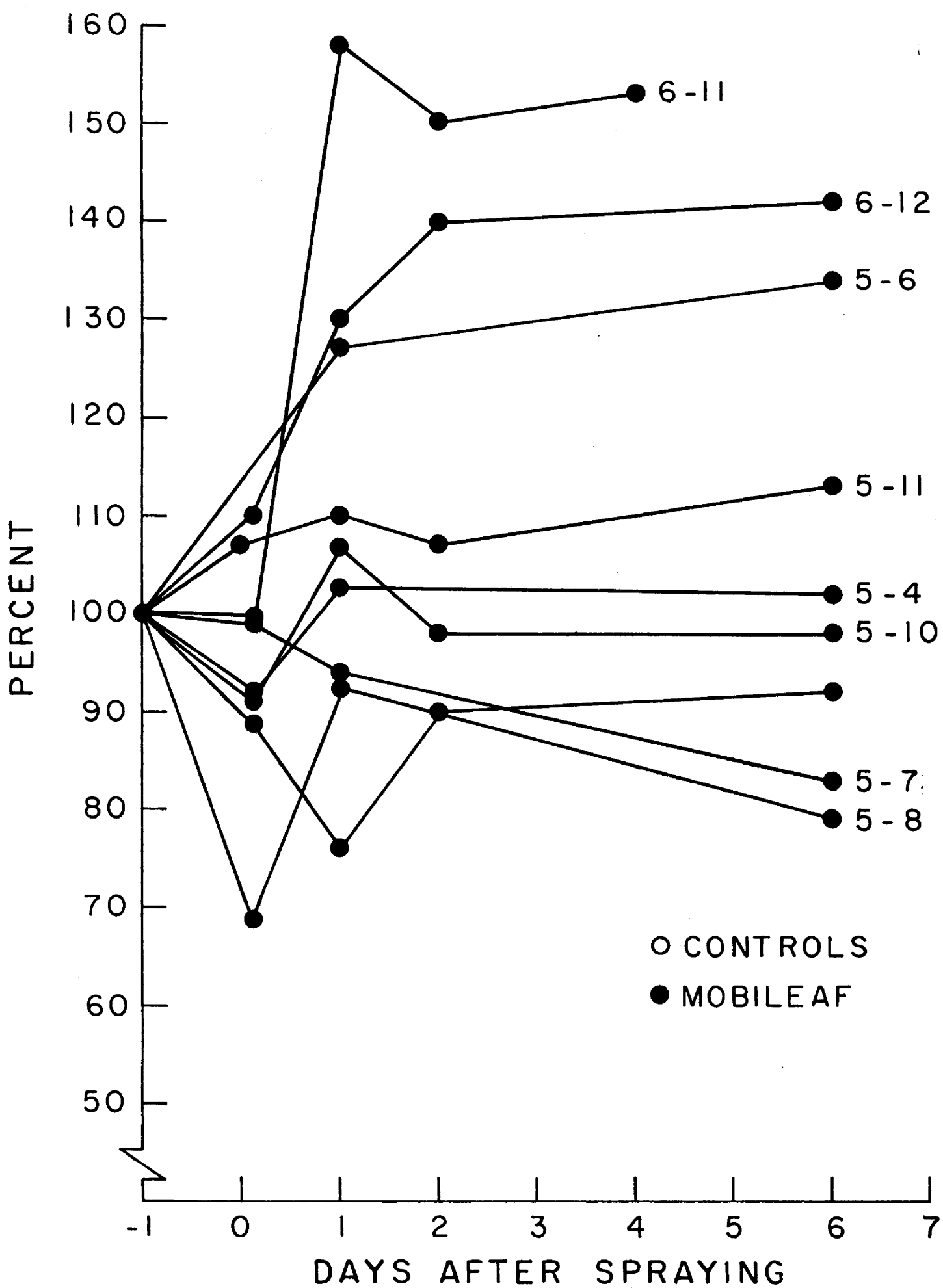


Figure 12. Water use efficiency (ratio of photosynthesis to transpiration) as a function of time of day for measurements taken on *Tamarix* branches at Bernardo, New Mexico, June 13-24, 1975.

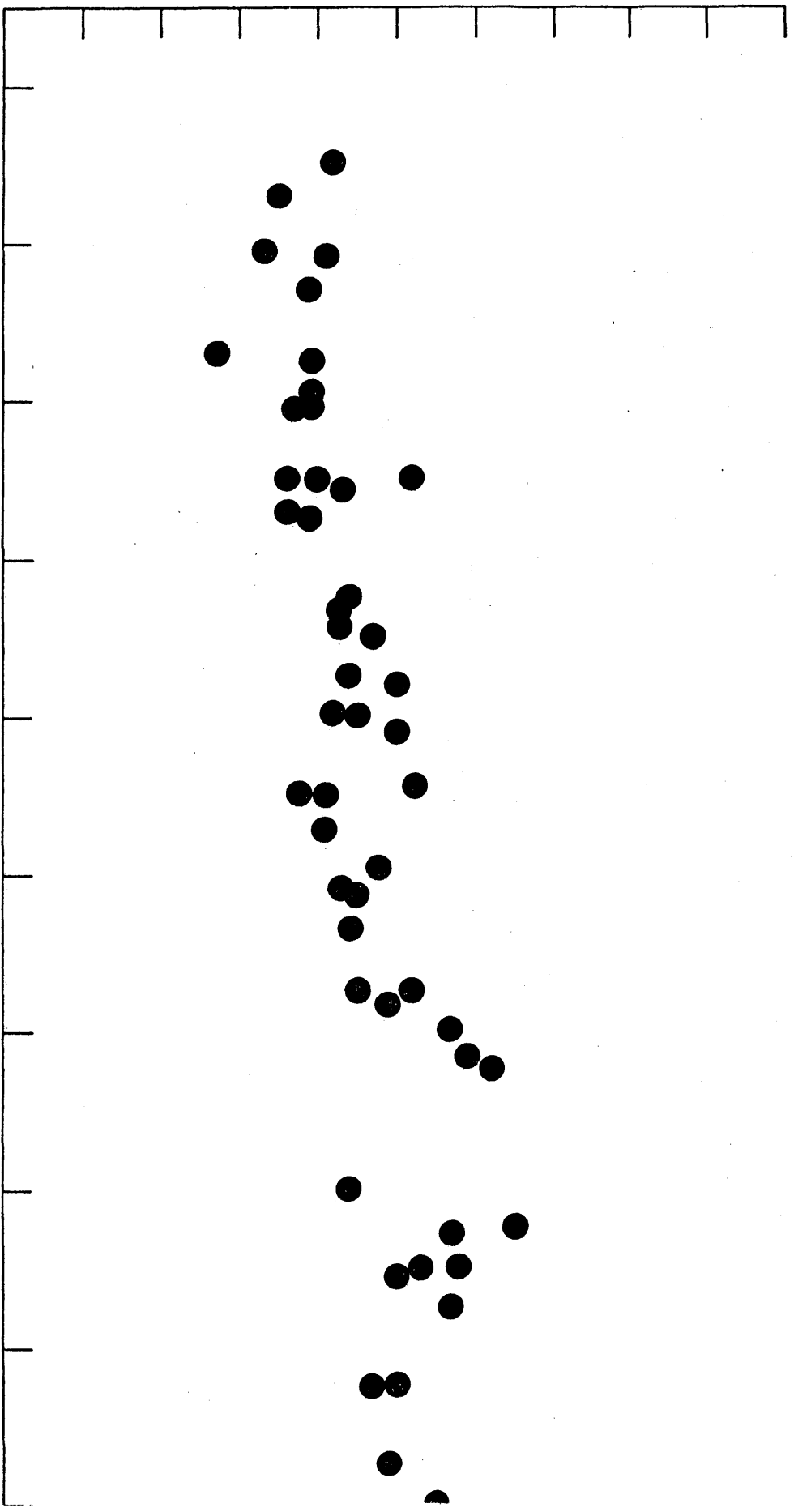
$$\text{Water Use Efficiency} = \frac{\text{mg CO}_2/\text{g dry wt. leaf-hr}}{\text{g H}_2\text{O}/\text{g dry wt. leaf-hr}} \times 10$$

# WATER USE EFFICIENCY

1.0  
0.9  
0.8  
0.7  
0.6  
0.5  
0.4  
0.3  
0.2  
0.1

0900 1000 1100 1200 1300 1400 1500 1600 1700 18

TIME OF DAY





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