

ENTREPRENEURSHIP–GROWING A BUSINESS

Rugged Spray Company

Tabor College

Dr. Melinda Rangel

400 South Jefferson Road

Hillsboro, KS 67063, USA

Abram Friesen

400 South Jefferson Road

Hillsboro, KS 67063, USA

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Invasive weeds are spreading across North America at a rapid rate, threatening the land we work to protect. Beating them requires resources and manpower, which are in short supply. At Rugged Spray Company, our business was founded to fight this crisis in Rural Montana. *At Rugged Spray Company, we aim to provide a skilled service based on hard work and integrity that shows through in our product.* We do this by providing a service that controls and suppresses noxious weeds using industrial-grade selective herbicides and equipment that are effective and safe for the environment. Target customers for our service include rural ranchers, farmers, and rural land owners who are looking to preserve and care for their land for the present and generations to come. At Rugged Spray Company, we take the saying “Your Land, Your Legacy” seriously, and it shows through our work, rapport, and growth throughout our time in operation.

In rural Montana, the need for herbicide application is at an all-time high. With increasingly developed land and an ever-increasing population, the demand for noxious weed control continues to climb. At Rugged Spray Company, we have taken advantage of this market and the scarcity of this service through a tested and effective strategy. Our business plan revolves around creating a convenient service that takes the burden off overexerted farmers and ranchers while fostering long-term business relationships and providing a professional product. Rugged Spray Co. targets ranchers with rangeland and prioritizes large contracts to maximize net profits and minimize expenses. Once we attain a contract, we charge an hourly rate, bill for chemical costs, and have a minimum charge to maximize our profit margin. This business plan has proven effective because of its high yield and the exposure larger contracts and locally known names provide to potential customers.

We are set apart from other companies in our field of work by the quality and attention we provide to each job, our eco-friendly approach, and our specialty within rangeland application. Rugged Spray Company is also in a unique position for investors. Coming up on year 3 of operation, we have developed a strong and growing clientele and created and reinforced business partnerships such as county highway contracts, railroad contracts, large-scale ranch operations, and subcontracting and partnering

with established businesses across Montana. This extensive network is what positions Rugged Spray Co to increase profits by over 50% (\$42,869.59 to 65,000) with 15 additional contracts already in place for the 2026 spray season, and a joint railroad contract with S&N weeds. In the year 2027, we have plans to purchase an XAG P100 Pro Agricultural Spray Drone because of the massive market opportunity within the drone spraying market. With projected market growth reporting an average of 20.3% annually for the last 3 consecutive years, this massive market opportunity, paired with an unusually quick break-even period, promises an exceptional ROI for the 2027 fiscal year.

In the following paper, I will address what sets Rugged Spray Co. apart from other companies and the model that positions us to not only make a great profit but, more importantly, have a long-term impact.

II. INTRODUCTION

A. Type of business and a description of current business operations.

Rugged Spray Co. is a Limited Liability Company based in Lewistown, Montana. As a service-based business specializing in pest control, we provide a premium, license-restricted service to local ranchers and landowners. Currently, within the growth phase, Rugged Spray Co. operates under a single-owner structure, ensuring unilateral operations and a clear strategic direction. Primary operations of the company entail the transport of equipment and chemicals via trailers on site, preparation of herbicide/surfactant mixes, and, most importantly, the direct application of product onto target plant species. Providing bids or quotes for customers is also a large part of Rugged Spray Co's operations. This often includes an on-site visit to analyze the geography, size, and volume of invasive species to formulate an estimated price. Additionally, the quoting process often entails meeting the customer in person or over a call, discussing terms, and providing a cost estimate.

Whilst networking and word-of-mouth serve as the main avenues of customer acquisition, active marketing efforts play a complementary role in business operations. Business advertising efforts include running newspaper ads, local flyers, and a targeted Facebook marketing campaign to enhance visibility. Additionally, Rugged Spray Company is a primary referral for trusted partner businesses such as Ferris

Custom Spraying, S&N Weeds, and the County Weed Department. Although Marketing plays an integral role in the majority of businesses, for Rugged Spray Company Client acquisition comes as the result of a rapidly increasing need for applicators in response to an ever-growing invasive weed crisis.

B. Products Offered

Currently, we provide services to 30+ ranchers, and our operation hours are completely based on the needs of Rugged Spray Co. and the convenience of the customer. Advertised services include noxious weed control of all terrestrial species and total vegetation control. Billing is determined by the cost of the chemical used, with a 30% markup on all products, a flat rate of \$120 per unit per hour, and a minimum charge of \$200. Additionally, distances over 60 miles are billed at a rate of \$2 per mile.

When a customer purchases our service, we bring specialized equipment, including an ATV, a sprayer with a 30-foot boom (swath width) and a mounted hand sprayer, a 600-gallon tank (on trailer) with a specialized chemical pump for filling sprayer tanks, and all required surfactants and chemicals for the specific job. Contract descriptions are strictly annual and have the option to be renewed every season. Contract descriptions vary, but the pricing remains consistent (excluding varying chemical costs). The Majority of Rugged Spray Company's business is sourced from rangeland contracts, which consist of spot herbicide treatment or grid-based herbicide application. Other contracts are sourced from farming operations or suburban properties.

C. Unique Characteristics of the Business

Rugged Spray Company is set apart from other companies through a triad of traits, including a specialty in rangeland management, an eco-friendly approach to spraying, and, finally, the quality and detail of our service.

Rugged Spray Company was founded on contracts with rangeland owners and has not strayed far from its roots. This specialty has given us an edge against general pest control businesses or broad-spectrum herbicide applicators by marketing a service that they know they can trust. With our specialization within this niche of the market, we have grown to understand the unique challenges posed by noxious weeds within pastures in rural Montana and can approach jobs confidently and effectively.

Our proficiency in rangeland management allows us to get the job done while leaving Montana's rugged landscape healthy and wild.

Rugged Spray Company's operations are deeply rooted in a passion for the outdoors and its preservation. Transforming this passion into action came naturally and has become a marketing point for the company. At Rugged Spray Co, we utilize selective herbicides and environmentally friendly surfactants to ensure the protection of native plant species, water quality, and soil health. We also employ techniques such as spot spraying that minimize unnecessary pesticide exposure and reduce chemical costs.

At Rugged Spray Co, quality is not the goal; it is the standard for how we operate. At the forefront of our mission statement is hard work, and that hard work shows in our service. At Rugged, every contract is approached with meticulous planning, expert execution, and thorough follow-up to show our commitment to our craft. From conducting detailed site assessments to optimizing chemical mixes, we make sure every job is tailored to the needs of our customers' land. This not only promotes customer loyalty, but it is also the key to our most profitable marketing strategy, networking.

These unique aspects of Rugged set it apart from local companies and have solidified it as a trusted name in the spraying industry. As we look ahead, evaluating every aspect of the company provides the opportunity to grow even more. Our evaluation of Rugged Spray Co's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will help guide us to long-term growth and stability.

D. Competitive Advantage and Barriers to Entry

While these traits play a vital role in the service quality and offering of Rugged, it is equally important to understand the structural advantages that limit competition and are integrated into the commercial application field.

Herbicide Applicators require two levels of certification, including the Private Applicator License, required to apply and purchase restricted herbicides, and the Commercial Applicator License, which is required for Commercial Applicators to create a Business and apply large scale as a contractor. Recertification credits are also required annually, and detailed spray records are required to remain in