

# Pest Control Chemicals

## Health, Safety and the Environment

This pamphlet explains:

- where you can obtain information in the ACT about pest control chemicals (also known as pesticides and agricultural chemicals);
- why they are used;
- their safe handling and use; and
- their potential hazards to health and the environment if they are misused or mishandled.



### WHAT ARE PEST CONTROL CHEMICALS?

Pest control chemicals are a group of chemicals used to control, repel or kill pests and prevent or control animal diseases. They include chemicals often referred to as

pesticides, insecticides, fungicides, weedicides, rodenticides, biocides and repellents.

Pest control chemicals are widely used in primary production, for commercial purposes and in domestic situations.

### CAN I AVOID USING PEST CONTROL CHEMICALS?

In many cases, there are other ways of dealing with pests. These include:

- ▶ Eliminating the conditions that insect and rodent pests prefer, for example, clearing away food scraps that may attract flies, ants and cockroaches.
- ▶ Creating physical barriers such as flyscreens to prevent the entry of pests.
- ▶ Physically removing weeds or using mulch to prevent weed growth.
- ▶ Maintaining good hygiene standards for humans and animals.
- ▶ Consulting your local garden centre or horticulturist for advice on pest control using natural predators and intercropping, such as planting marigolds amongst tomatoes to control nematode.

Sometimes prevention will not be fully effective and the use of pest control chemicals will be necessary.

### WHO CAN USE THEM?

Householders can use pest control chemicals around the home. But remember, whether you are using a flyspray or a common weedkiller, always follow the instructions on the product label.

For larger pest control jobs Environment ACT recommends that you hire a professional pest controller. They are authorised under the *Environment Protection Act 1997* and have to operate in accordance with strict licence conditions.

### MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS

All pest control chemicals have a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) which provides additional information to that given on the product's label. This includes details on health and safety, and environmental effects. MSDSs are available from chemical product distributors or manufacturers. Pest control businesses should also be able to provide a MSDS on the particular pest control chemical they are using.

### HOW TO USE A PEST CONTROL CHEMICAL

When using pest control chemicals follow these steps to ensure that hazards and potential exposure are minimised.

- ▶ When purchasing a chemical seek advice from sales staff.
- ▶ Select the right chemical by first reading the chemical product label very carefully.
- ▶ Buy and prepare only the smallest amount needed for the specific task.

- ▶ Always read and follow the instructions on the product label.

Refer to the product label and MSDS to determine the:

- ▶ correct equipment to apply the chemical;
- ▶ protective equipment which must be worn for its safe use and handling; and
- ▶ safe transport and storage of the chemical.

After chemical use wash the equipment and yourself thoroughly.

Further information on safety requirements may also be obtained from ACT WorkCover on 6205 0200.

For advice on the disposal of unwanted chemicals and empty containers contact Environment ACT on 6207 9777.

## IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS

### How toxic are pest control chemicals?

Pest control chemicals must be approved and registered by the National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) before they are allowed to be sold. Part of the approval process is an assessment of the chemical's effectiveness and potential impact on health, water safety, the environment and trade.

Although many pest control chemicals have toxic properties, they only become hazardous to humans and the environment if misused or carelessly handled.

### Who can provide information on environmental issues?

Environment ACT can provide:

- ▶ information on whether a pest control chemical is registered for use or whether a permit is current for a particular use of a pest control chemical;
- ▶ a list of all pest control businesses that have been granted an environmental authorisation under the *Environment Protection Act 1997*; and
- ▶ advice on handling chemicals which are banned, old or unwanted.

Contact the Environment ACT Helpline on 6207 9777.

### Who can provide information on health issues?

In emergencies, the Poisons Information Service is a 24 hour telephone contact providing information to the community on exposure to a range of chemicals including pest control chemicals.

Contact: 131126.

The Health Protection Service of the ACT Department of Health and Community Services is able to provide information to the community on public health issues relating to chemical exposure.

Contact: 6205 8718.

The NRA has an Adverse Experience Reporting Program which enables the community to report problems associated with veterinary chemicals.

Contact: 6272 3651.

The NRA also maintains a publicly accessible database of registered pest control chemicals on their website <http://www.affa.gov.au/nra>

Contact the Registration Information Line on 6272 5785.

### What if I don't want government weed control contractors to spray near my property?

Canberra Urban Parks and Places have established a 'No Spray Register.' If members of the public are prepared to maintain a mown strip or a 300mm wide strip free of weeds around the perimeter of their property, then the ACT Government will refrain from using herbicides to kill weeds along their boundary line.

Contact Canberra Urban Parks and Places on 6207 2511.



This information leaflet has been prepared with the advice and assistance of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Coordination Network which comprises representatives from the Department of Urban Services, Department of Health and Community Care, Department of Education and Community Services and the Chief Minister's Department.



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