

What pesticides can I use?

Simply defined, a pesticide is a substance or organism that is used to affect the growth or survival of a pest (such as insects, mites, fungi, bacteria) or affect the growth or survival of a plant (such as a weed). Therefore the word pesticide includes all substances such as insecticides, fungicides, miticides and herbicides.

Pesticides are often used to allow the efficient production of quality agricultural products. The Australian community demands regulation of these pesticides because of their potential to affect public health, the environment and our vital export markets.

The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is responsible for the assessment and registration of all agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

In NSW, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is responsible for administering the *Pesticides Act 1999* which covers the use and application of agricultural chemicals.

If you use pesticides for commercial or occupational purposes, you must be trained. This new law came into force on 1 September 2005. The DEC is responsible for enforcing this legislation. Training must be renewed every five years.

It is illegal to possess, sell, supply or use a pesticide that is not registered. Also, the pesticide *must* be registered for the specific purpose for which it will be used. Permits can be issued to allow specific minor uses or to cover new situations.

Before using any pesticide, read the whole label carefully, including the 'Safety Directions', 'Directions for Use' and any special conditions or restrictions that may apply. There will usually be a 'Directions for Use' table that contains information about the crop or situation, pest to be controlled, and the rate at which the chemical should be applied in each case. The table also indicates if a particular use is approved in NSW.

The *Pesticides Act 1999* requires that a person using a registered pesticide must read the label or have it explained to them.

Know the problem

Before using any pesticide you need to be clear about the problem you are trying to solve:

- What is the crop or situation?
- What pests or diseases are present?

Knowing the answers to these basic questions is very important. You may need to seek advice, particularly on the identification of pests, diseases or weeds. Wrong identification often results in the wrong treatment and wasted money.

Find out what pesticides to use

Having defined the problem, there are a number of ways to find out what pesticides are available for each crop and associated pest, disease or weed. Your chemical supplier may be able to help, but if you are not sure, ask to be shown the pesticide label where the 'Directions for Use' section lists information on the crop and pests / diseases



controlled. Alternatively, you can purchase a copy of InfoPest. Infopest is a database of registered agricultural chemicals and is available on CD. Infopest is updated three times a year and lists pesticides registered for a range of crops, pests and diseases.

For further information on Infopest contact the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries. Phone (07) 3239 3967 www.dpi.qld.gov.au/infopest

You can also obtain information on registered pesticides for a crop from NSW DPI.

The APVMA website also lists registered pesticides and includes labels that can be viewed or printed. www.apvma.gov.au

Check pesticides on hand?

If you have a pesticide and want to know if it can be used for your current problem, read the label carefully. If you have had the pesticide for some time the label may be out-of-date or the pesticide may no longer be registered. In this case, contact NSW DPI, the APVMA or the DEC to check whether the conditions of use have changed.

Unless the label lists the particular pest or plant then you **cannot** legally use that pesticide. The only exception is where the desired use pattern is covered by a permit issued by the APVMA but you are required to read the permit or have it explained to you before you use the pesticide.

Read the label

The following are the essential things to look for on a pesticide label when determining whether it is the one for the job:

Crop. Make sure the pesticide label includes the crop you want to treat. If a pesticide is applied to a crop for which there are no registered uses, the produce may violate food standards and be unsuitable for sale.

Pest, disease or weed. If the pest, disease or weed is not listed on the label, then the pesticide cannot be used. The only exception is where a permit has been issued allowing the desired use pattern.

State. Some uses are not allowed in some states. The pesticide cannot be used in NSW unless it specifically states 'NSW' or 'ALL STATES'.

Application rate. The rate at which the pesticide is mixed and applied is very important. Use only the rate/s indicated on the label. Using a rate contrary to that stated on the label may be ineffective and lead to resistance, while higher rates may damage the crop or result in unacceptably high residues.

Withholding period. This is the period between application of a pesticide and harvest. It is not the period between application and consumption. It is most important in ensuring that produce does not contain residues which might be illegal or harmful. The pesticide must not be used closer to harvest than indicated.

Remember to read all of the label because all label instructions are compulsory in NSW.

Permits

Where there is nothing registered for a minor use or emergency situation, permits may be issued to allow specific pesticides to be used for the desired purpose. These permits do not by-pass the normal registration process. Permits are only issued when there is a good reason, and will rarely be issued if there are already pesticides registered for the purpose intended.

The APVMA can provide information on existing permits on request or advise on the process of having a permit approved. People who choose to ignore directions on pesticide labels, or use unregistered pesticides are liable to prosecution and, on conviction, may pay hefty penalties under State and Commonwealth legislation.

Further information

Contact your district horticulturist or pesticide inspector.

- APVMA, Phone 02 6272 5158
- NSW DPI, Phone 02 6391 3100
- DEC, Phone 02 9995 5000