

Basic Tips on Reading Pesticide Labels

By Lee Ware

Types of Pesticides:

The label must indicate what type of pesticide the product is or what pests it will control.

Ingredient Statements:

Check the active ingredients when you compare pesticides. The statement must include both the active and inert ingredients in the product.

ATTENTION:

The EPA has a list of inert ingredients that can be used that pose little to no health risk, so companies only need to list the percentage, not what they are on the label. So if you buy 2 different products with the same active ingredients, residual, attractiveness and so on may make one product work better than another.

Signal Words:

Signal word will indicate the products toxicity from a single dose. There are 4 main signal words.

- **Danger-Poison** with a skull and crossbones signal. This means that the product is highly toxic and can be fatal even in low doses. The wording will be labelled in red.
- **Danger:** product is corrosive and can cause irreversible eye damage or severe skin injury.
- **Warning:** means that the product is moderately toxic or can cause moderate eye or skin irritation.
- **Caution:** means that the product is slightly toxic or may cause slight eye or skin irritation.

Get additional tips on toxicity by reading the precautionary statement section.

Statement of Practical Treatment: This section will list the first aid treatment for accidental exposure to the pesticide.

Note to Physician: Provides emergency medical personnel with a poison treatment and will suggest antidotes. Sometimes there may be an emergency phone number.

Precautionary Statement: This section identifies potential hazards and recommends ways to minimize or avoid risks such as "Environmental Hazards", "Hazards to Humans and Domestic Animals" or "Physical or Chemical Hazards".

Hazards to Humans and Domestic Pets: A signal word is listed and statements that lists potential points of entry such as mouth, eyes, or skin that must be protected to prevent exposure that could be harmful. This section should also indicate what the major concern is such as irritation, corrosiveness, or illness. Protective clothing and equipment required to handle the pesticide to prevent overexposure as well as laundering instructions should be here.

Environmental Hazards: This section warns of the pesticides risk to the wildlife, bees, birds, fish, septic areas, water quality and gives practical procedures to avoid harm to organisms and the environment.

Physical or Chemical Hazards: This section provides enough information to aid in your decision of using a pesticide. Do you have the right product and equipment to apply it? How many times must you treat to break the insects life cycle and can I use it in the area that needs treated are some questions you should ask yourself. Use proper timing and spot or target treatment(s) to reducing pesticide use.

Directions for Use: Under this section it will start off with a statement like "It is a violation of Federal law to use this product in a manner inconsistent with its labelling". Follow the usage directions!!! Pesticides used on food plants will lists how many days prior to harvest you should use it to minimize pesticide residue to tolerant levels that the EPA regards as safe to use.

Storage and Disposal: All pesticide labels will have this section to let you know how to properly store and dispose of the product. This section usually considers 3 factors like that pesticide must be registered with the EPA before being sold or applied. The label must provide information to the users of the pesticide for safe handling. Last is that the pesticide must be used according to its directions to get effective pest control and using it safely.

When you use a pesticide you are responsible and can be held liable for any misuse of the product that falls in the labelling directions and can be held liable for any damage, loss or even unintended consequences that the pesticide may cause.

ALWAYS READ THE LABEL



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