

For Safety's Sake, Read Pesticide Labels

NEWARK, Del. — The label on a pesticide container is important to every user. The information it contains comes from years of costly tests and studies, and informs the reader how to use the product safely and effectively.

"When properly followed," says University of Delaware extension entomologist Mark R. Graustein, "the label provides protection for the applicators, consumers, fish and wildlife. So read all of the label for every pesticide you use. Do not rely on your memory."

A label contains several kinds of information. First, it identifies the contents of the container. Chemicals are listed in a standard form so users know exactly what they're applying. "Improper use of a chemical can cause crop injury, poor pest control or illegal residues," the specialist says. "This may render the treated crop unfit for market, and you, the applicator, would be legally responsible for any losses."

Most labels use signal words to state a pesticide's toxicity to

humans. They also list protective equipment -- such as masks, gloves and respirators -- needed for safe handling and use. "The applicator who works frequently with such chemicals must be especially careful," Graustein says. "Don't take chances with your health -- follow the safety precautions given."

Pesticide labels also list the uses for which chemicals have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). "If the intended use is not listed, don't use the product," he warns. "You are legally responsible for any accident or crop loss that results from applying materials that are not approved." Certain formulations of a particular pesticide may be intended for a specific use, such as on livestock, even though in different forms the pesticide is registered for other purposes. Generally, any non-labeled use is considered a misuse, and the applicator may be taken to court.

Recommended doses and directions for applying the pesticide for

approved uses are also given on every label. These questions can be helpful because they state the maximum dosages allowed by law. However, actual conditions may not require a maximum dose for good control of the pest being treated. Use no more pesticide than is needed, Graustein advises.

A pesticide can often be combined with other pesticides or fertilizers for one application. But sometimes chemicals can't be mixed without destroying their effectiveness. Check compatibility before you mix. The label usually states which other materials can or cannot be combined with the product.

It will also state whether plant injury is likely. Some plants are more sensitive than others to certain chemicals. Injury can range from slight burning to complete foliage loss or even death of the plant, so be sure to choose a pesticide that is safe for the target plant.

Two new precautionary statements are now on the labels of newly manufactured pesticide pro-

ducts, the specialist says. The first one represents a list of endangered species of both plant and wildlife that are sensitive to the pesticide. It is up to the applicator to determine if any of these species are present where the pesticide is to be used. Use is either prohibited or highly restricted where an endangered species exists. The second precaution deals with leachability, or the potential for groundwater contamination. The label states the leachability of the pesticide and cautions against use under certain soil conditions that add to the leachability.

The information which appears on a pesticide label meets strict government requirements. The label itself -- not just the product --

must be registered by the EPA before it can be used. EPA reviews and approves each statement given. Toxic warnings are based on results of tests required by law. A pesticide and its label can be registered only when it is clear that applicators, consumers and the environment will be protected from the chemical's effects. If directions are followed carefully, no illegal residues should be found on any crop.

Getting a single pesticide ready for registration and use usually takes about 10 years and costs the manufacturer more than \$25 million," Graustein concludes. "Surely if it costs that much to develop those directions, the label ought to be worth reading."

Watch For Corn Rootworm

Adult corn rootworms have been reported emerging in southern areas of the state. Warm weather this year has accelerated corn rootworm development. Because corn planting was delayed in many areas of the state because of rain and high numbers of emerging adults are expected, corn fields may be more susceptible to silk

clipping by adult rootworm this year.

Watch all fields closely for potential silk clipping. Five or more adults per plant would warrant an insecticide application. Once the silks are brown, pollination is complete and silk clipping will have no impact on yield.

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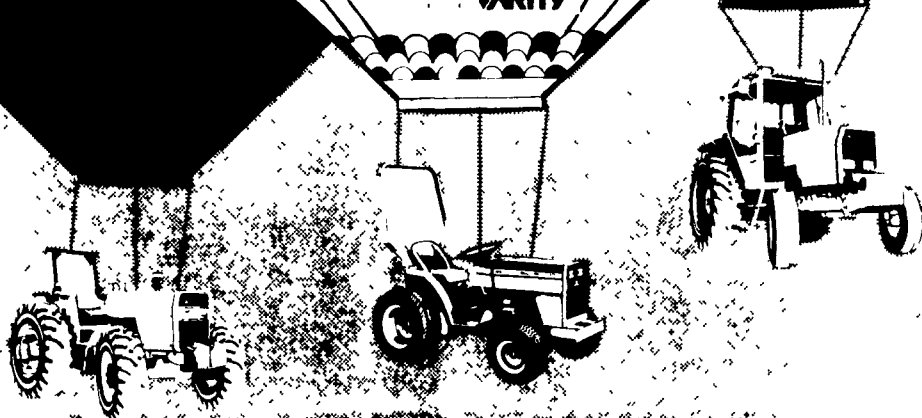
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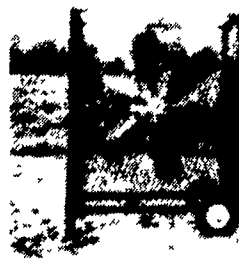
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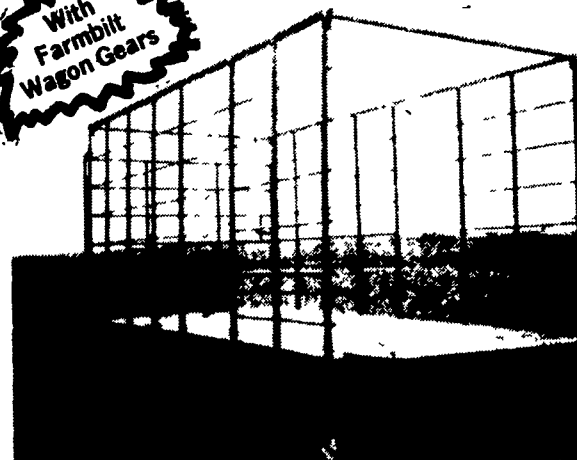
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