

Swine Management Column

BY
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Read The Label

Just recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a pesticide-applicators training workshop that was held in a community west of Dover. While I have assisted various farmers in the past regarding pesticides and their safe use, until then I had not taken the exam to become certified myself. This meeting was a way to brush up on pesticide safety and to get certified in one shot.

All of us involved with agriculture come in frequent contact with pesticides. We use them to protect our crops from insects, weeds and disease pests and to protect our livestock from diseases and parasites.

The most important questions to ask yourself are: "Am I taking the proper precautions when using pesticides?" And "Do I know the materials I'm using and how toxic they may be to me and my livestock?"

Essentially a pesticide works as a toxin, repellent, attractant or sterilant of pests. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) currently has about 57,000 registrations for pesticide-containing products

and registrations for more than 1,750 active ingredients in those products.

Pesticides come in a whole host of formulations. There are aerosols, baits, liquids, granules, emulsifiable concentrates, dusts, impregnated materials, slow release materials, oral materials and rub-on creams and lotions. Each of these materials has specific activities and comes in the form best designed to accomplish the task for which it was developed.

Pesticides work in several ways. There are short-lived contact killers that can be applied directly to pests, and residual materials that are applied so that they eventually come in contact with the target pest.

Pesticides are developed to kill or otherwise control pests, but because they have the potential hazard of killing or injuring us, too, we must be very careful in using them. The acute or quick toxicity of a pesticide is measured as the LD50. This is the amount of

pesticide needed per unit of body weight to cause the death of 50 percent of the test animals exposed to it.

It is important to realize that almost any compound is toxic if consumed in a great quantity. Sugar or table salt, for example, if consumed as a rate of 4 grams (there are 454 grams in a pound) per kilogram (2.2 pounds) of body weight, will cause death in 50 percent of the test animals fed it. This is the same LD50 as malathion, a common insecticide used around livestock. The LD50 of caffeine is 225 milligrams (one milligram = 1/1000 of a gram) per kilogram of body weight, while nicotine is 1 milligram per kilogram of body weight. Lindane, another insecticide used around hogs, has an LD50 of 88 to 125 milligrams per kilogram of body weight.

Don't get me wrong. I am not advocating the consumption of pesticides, but just letting you know that some of the common everyday items we consume are

toxic if taken in large-enough doses. In fact, some of these items are even more acutely toxic than certain pesticides. On the other hand, some restricted-use pesticides are extremely toxic, and misuse of any pesticides can be fatal.

In addition to their acute toxicity, some pesticide compounds also have long-lasting or chronic effects. These are the effects that you don't see immediately, such as the development of cancer, tumors and even genetic defects in unborn fetuses.

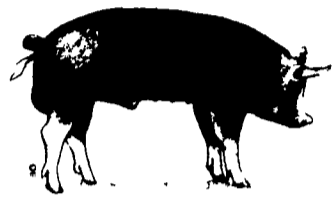
These potential problems are the reasons why all pesticides are closely scrutinized for their acute and chronic toxicity characteristics. As a matter of fact, many previously approved pesticides are now being re-reviewed by the EPA since they were originally approved at a time when the

requirements for clearance were more relaxed than they currently are.

What can you do to avoid the harmful effects of pesticides?

First, read the label of any pesticide when you buy it and again when you use it. When you buy a pesticide that you have used for years, re-read the label. Many labels are being updated and contain new information.

Finally and most importantly, follow the practices described on the label. It does you no good at all to read and ignore that information. If the label tells you to wear a respirator, coveralls and gloves, by all means do so. The guidelines printed on the label were developed to protect you, the user of those pesticides. Don't take chances. The risks are too great.



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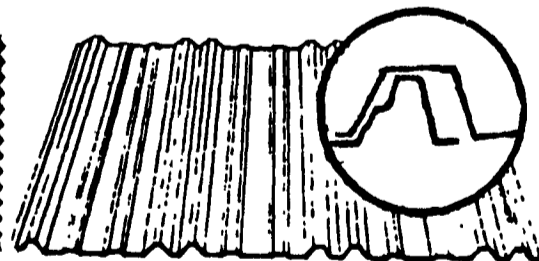
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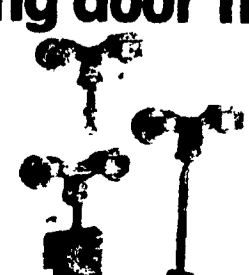
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