

Vet Urges Caution With Pesticides

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training. Young Farmers attending the event received 2 core credits toward their certification.

Sammons, standing above the crowd on the bumper of the Rehersburg Rescue truck, opened the program with a leading question, "How many of you have your pesticides stored in a separate locked building?" Getting no response, Sammons said, "I'm not surprised. Pesticides should be stored in a safe area away from children, pets and livestock. They should be kept in marked containers that include a list of the contents.

When choosing a place to store pesticides plan ahead: Think how runoff could be controlled should an accident occur and it's nice to have a fire extinguisher handy." Sammons also reminded the audience that fertilizers, liquid ammonia and fuels should be stored with care.

"Now how many of you have read the label of the pesticides you are applying and I mean the whole label." Again no one raised their hands. "Pesticide companies change their products often, sometimes early. If you used a pound of something last year it may only take a tenth of a pound this year to accomplish the same job. Don't mix products together unless the label instructs you to do so. Some pesticides aren't meant to be put together."

Sammons' final question in-

involved protective clothing. None of the audience volunteered that they were wearing proper clothing and Sammons stressed its importance. "Pesticides can cause chronic poisoning. The effects of this poisoning include genetic defects, cancer and clinical signs like a twitching eye."

Pat Richie of the Berks Cooperative Extension Service added several precautions for clothing care. "Be sure to launder clothes separate from the rest of the family wash and the washer should be run on an additional rinse cycle with no clothes in it to help clean the machine. Make sure before you take your gloves off to wash them. Always wash your hands before going to the bathroom and when you're finished applying pesticides shower immediately."

Sammons continued in the same vein. "Remember to clean up properly and dispose of leftovers carefully. There was a case of a farmer who put some leftover furadan in a mineral bag. The pesticides were stored in the same area as the minerals and the next morning an employee picked up the bag of furadan by mistake. The farmer ended up with 100 dead cows. That's a pretty expensive way to save three dollars worth of pesticide."

"Also take care to park sprayers in a safe area, away from wells and the neighbor's lawn. Properly dispose of empty containers too. One empty furadan bag blew into

a pasture and a farmer called us with three dead cows. Read label directions to find out what to do with empty containers. I know that everyone has been busy in the last week and there are a lot of farms with empty pesticide containers sitting around right now. It pays to be careful. also don't store pesticides for a long time. We received a call from a farmer that his cows were acting goofy. A strange yellow substance was dripping down from the ceiling onto his cows. It turned out that a pesticide that the farmer had put away 15 years ago was leaking. If you're not going to use it, get rid of it."

Sammons then offered some invaluable advice on what to do if the unthinkable should happen and he prefaced his instructions with words designed to make family members sit up and take notice. "Women and children should pay close attention to what we're about to discuss. When pesticide accidents occur it is most likely that the farmer will be involved and you may be required to act quickly."

"Rule #1... don't be a hero. Save yourself and other people first, then the animals, then if there is any safe way to control runoff. Second get help fast. Berks County will soon have a 911 number, use it.

Rule #3, stop the problem. A small dike may control runoff until proper authorities can arrive. Remember to use your head and don't endanger yourself. Fourth, control the area by keeping people away from the danger. Number 5, if you have been exposed call the poison control center. In Berks Co. this is Reading Hospital. If you need medical attention try to have someone drive you to the hospital. The ten to 15 minutes it could take an ambulance to get to your farm may be critical. Try to rinse yourself off before leaving for the hospital and at the very least tell the medical personnel what you have been exposed to so that they can take the proper precautions. Also try to take a clean pesticide label with you.

If animals are exposed call the vet immediately. There now is a statewide antidote program. The centers closest to us are Penn State and New Bolton Center. To get antidotes from either place can take four hours by vehicle so timing is very important.

Finally, make sure to call your insurance company as soon as possible. You are going to be responsible to pay for the cleanup of the accident and you want your company to be informed right away."

Sammons made it clear that timing can be critical in a pesticide accident and that cleanup can be a highly involved operation. "It will take 5 to 15 minutes for the local fire company to arrive. If they determine that it is beyond their capacity to handle they will call a level 2 unit which will be on the scene in 30 minutes to an hour. If they can't handle it Berks County has just established a level three team at the Berks Ag. Center. It will take an hour for them to arrive. You will be expected to provide parking for 25 vehicles. The crews will need electricity and a decontamination area will have to be set up complete with showers so team members can wash immediately after leaving the contaminated area.

If the spill is large enough the DER and the EPA will be called and it can take them hours to arrive. A safety zone of 1/2 to one



Lester Felck, Bernville Fire Chief, models a disposable pesticide clean up outfit. The suit which costs \$75 is used in low level pesticide spills. According to Sammons protective clothing for large highly toxic pesticide accidents can cost \$3500.

mile may be established.

If the dirt is contaminated it will have to be removed and two inches of clean soil from under the dirty soil will also have to be removed. It can leave quite a hole. You may be asked to get several loads of commercial sawdust to help absorb the pesticide. In some cases where pesticides were in burning structures it was less expensive to let the barn burn than to clean up the runoff," Sammons said.

The expense doesn't end there, according to Sammons. "Local fire companies have disposable suits to protect them from contamination. Each of these costs \$75. If it is a major problem there are suits that cost \$3500 and the cleanup personnel work in teams of at least two. So there is \$7,000 and often these suits can not be reused."

Members of the Bernville Fire Company modeled their regular fire gear which Sammons explained was ineffective in a pesticide accident and the disposable suits designed for hazardous materials work. Then the firemen thrilled the youngsters in the audience by using their hoses to spray simulated foam and water across the farm driveway in a demonstration of containment techniques.

Despite the incredible hazards and costs involved in an accident, Sammons had numerous examples of careless conduct with pesticides. "In Berks Co. there was one young boy who was playing with a dump truck. He pushed it into his dad's pesticide storage area and filled it with furadan. Then he fed it to dad's cows. Pretty soon four of the animals were acting pretty goofy and the boy ran and hid. His brother called the dad and he called us. Fortunately he did so promptly. The little boy was all right and the cows were treated. But the farmer had not only the vet expenses but he had to dump his milk from

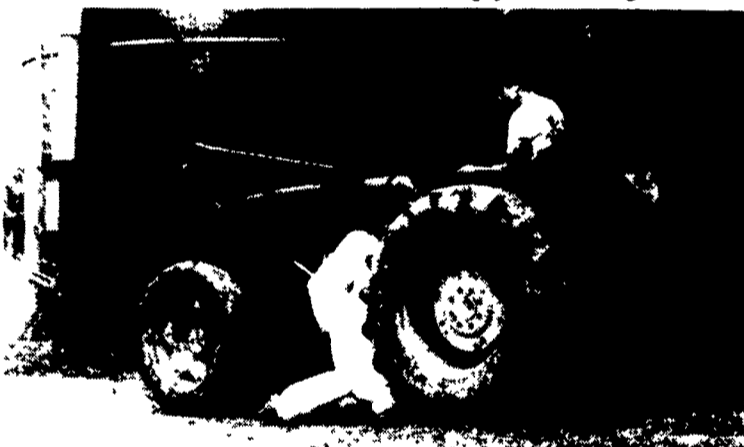
those animals for 10 days."

Several of Sammons' examples didn't end so happily. Eighteen cows were killed in a Bladex accident and the vet explained that there is no antidote for Bladex. He also mentioned that golden maladin, a pesticide targeted for flies, is the number one killer for farm dogs. "Now you may think that you wouldn't put much money into a farm dog but if your six-year-old daughter has her arms around the dog's neck and is crying 'please save my puppy,' I'll bet most of you would pack the dog up and bring him to the vets. Maladin is a sugar-based product and kids like it too so be careful with it."

Sammons ended his talk by reminding the farmers that they needed to comply to OSHA's right to know rules and that includes information on all pesticides. "In Northwestern Berks fire departments are trying to have farmers send them a list of the pesticides on the farm, their storage areas, and the location of the farm's wells for future reference."

In another safety related issue, four members of the Tulpehocken FFA proved how easy it is to have a tractor accident involving extra riders. Steve Tice, Michael Forry, Robert Krill explained that tractors are not designed to carry extra passengers. Most unnecessary riders are children and according to a Cooperative Extension Ag. Engineering fact sheet, over half of reported farm accidents in Pennsylvania, involving extra riders in 1977, 1978 and 1979 were fatal. Duane Stump then dramatized an accident using a stuffed dummy with a balloon for a head as his extra rider. The dummy fell under the back wheel of the tractor and the pop of the balloon was clearly audible.

Following the program, the Young Farmers held a short meeting then adjourned for homemade ice cream and strawberries.



Duane Stump of the Tulpehocken FFA demonstrates why it's not good to have extra riders on tractors during the Tulpehocken Young Farmers recent meeting.



Rita Stump, center, dishes homemade ice cream for the 80 people that attended the Tulpehocken Young Farmers Pesticide Safety Meeting and Ice Cream Social.