What’s on a pesticide label?

The pesticide label is the information printed on, attached to, or provided with the pesticide container. It is a legal document.

You should read and follow all label directions:
- Before you buy the product
- Before mixing the pesticide
- Before storing the pesticide
- Before disposing of the container

All pesticide labels contain the same categories of information. However, they do not all follow the same format. It may be hard to find some categories.

Pesticide labels are often difficult to read because of the way the product is packaged and the fine print. There are often unfamiliar words found on the labels. If you have trouble understanding a label, seek help from your county Cooperative Extension office or the product manufacturer.

Store and handle pesticides properly. Pesticide which has dripped down the container may make the label unreadable.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Can I apply a pesticide at a rate higher than the rate specified on the label?
A: No. It is against the law to apply a pesticide at a rate higher than that specified on the product label. However, it’s not against the law to apply a pesticide at less than the labeled rate. Keep in mind however, that the pesticide manufacturer will not guarantee the product will give you successful control at a lower rate.

Q: If I have an insecticide whose label states it can be used to control aphids on roses can I use it to control aphids on beans?
A: No. You may only apply a product to the site or crops specified on the label. You can use a pesticide to control a pest that is not listed on the label as long as the site is listed on the label.

Q: Can I mix two pesticides together in the same spray?
A: If the label of both products state they may be mixed, you may. The label may give specific mixing instructions to ensure a uniform and compatible mixture.

Q: My brand of mosquito repellent states that I shouldn’t apply the product directly to my child’s skin. Why?
A: Some products may be irritating to the skin or may cause a rash. Others may be absorbed by the skin and cause serious side effects. If the product label specifies that it should not be applied directly to skin, abide by the warning.

Home PEST seeks to provide homeowners with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about pesticides.

This publication is available from your county Cooperative Extension office.

The Home PEST project was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Pesticide Application Training (PAT) program.

Any reference to pesticide products are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of one product over another similar product.

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