Before You Apply a Pesticide

Along with your right to apply pesticides comes your responsibility to prevent damage or injury to yourself, others, non-target plants and animals, property, and the environment. There are several things you need to do before you even open the pesticide container.

Check your Equipment
- Never use leaky equipment.
- Make sure you have the right equipment for the job.
- Make sure you know how to use and clean the equipment.
- Calibrate your equipment, as described in Home PEST brochure #8, “Head Sprayer Calibration” and #9, “Sprayer Calibration.”
- Larger jobs (e.g., over-sized lot, tall trees) may require the services of a professional.

Prepare the area to be treated
- Keep adults, children, and pets away from the area during treatment and for any time period after treatment that the product label specifies.
- Remove all food, toys, and pet dishes from the area to be treated.
- If you are treating an outdoor area near the house, close nearby windows to prevent the pesticide from drifting into unwanted areas and causing damage.

Mix the Pesticide
You are now ready to open the pesticide container and add the pesticide (and water if necessary) into your application equipment. Refer to Home PEST brochure #6, “Mixing Pesticides” on how to mix pesticides safely.

When you apply a pesticide
- Wear the proper personal protective clothing and equipment when you apply pesticides. Check the product label and see Home PEST brochure #10, “Personal Protective Equipment.”
- Do not smoke, eat, or eat while applying pesticides.
- In a tight breeze, keep yourself upwind of the spray nozzle.
- Keep a constant pressure in the sprayer and agitate frequently if necessary.
- Confine your sprayer to the target area.
- If you should spill or spray pesticides on yourself during an application, stop and clean up immediately.

After you apply a pesticide
- Never open a sprayer when its contents are under pressure. The owner’s manual will tell you how to release the pressure.
- Clean the equipment you used. Partially fill the sprayer with water, shake, and spray the residue onto the treatment area. Repeat this process two more times before properly storing the sprayer. Hose off your sprayer before storing it.
- Remove your personal protective clothing and handle according to the instructions given in Home PEST brochure #10, “Personal Protective Equipment.”
- Wash any exposed skin with soap and water.

Proper pesticide application

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

The Home PEST project was developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Pesticide Applicator Training (PAT) program. Any reference to pesticide products are for your convenience and are not an endorsement or criticism of any product over other similar products.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, an equal opportunity educational and employment institution, requires that all personnel and equipment when you apply pesticides. Check the product label and see Home PEST brochure #10, “Personal Protective Equipment.”
- Do not smoke, eat, or eat while applying pesticides.
- In a light breeze, keep yourself upwind of the spray nozzle.
- Keep a constant pressure in the sprayer and agitate frequently if necessary.
- Confine your sprayer to the target area.
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