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AG CHEMICAL UPDATE

Pesticides are chemical compounds registered by the EPA that kill or control something. Examples of common pesticides include weed killers (herbicides), insect killers (insecticides), rodent killers (rodenticides) and disease preventers (fungicides). Most people are surprised by the fact they have pesticides underneath the kitchen sink, including Comet, Ammonia and Chlorox. These pesticides kill and control bacteria and must be registered by the EPA and have safety use instructions on the label. When a person says all pesticides are bad, they better look underneath the kitchen sink first.

Pesticides are sold as general use compounds or restricted use compounds. Comet, Ammonia, Chlorox, 2,4-D, Roundup, and Tordon RTU are all examples of general use compounds. Any person can purchase these products and should apply them safely according to label on their private property. Restricted use compounds are different. Farmers and applicators attend a 3 hour meeting taught by extension educators once every three years called private applicator training in order to continue to purchase and/or apply restricted use compounds for their private use. For instance, any herbicide with Atrazine is a restricted use compound because of water quality concerns.

The private applicator program cost with materials is \$15.00 per applicator. Following the meeting, applicators are billed \$25.00 by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and applicators must pay this in order to get a new restricted use pesticide license. The \$25.00 fee replaces the \$1 per ton fertilizer tax which used to be on the books. The fee is sent to the local NRD Natural Resource Water Quality Fund. With the Lower Big Blue NRD, applicators can apply for cost share from this fund for closing abandoned wells, receive \$50.00 if you deep soil sample for nitrates in a field and you can make yourself eligible for what I call the fertilizer controller lottery. There are other cost share programs in this fund, so consult your local NRD for more information here.

LB 329, passed one year ago, has three important changes. (1) The amendment sets a minimum age of 16 years old for youth to receive a pesticide license for restricted use products. (2) A custom farmer is a commercial applicator if he gets paid for a restricted use compound application. If you barter or trade services, it is still legal to do this with your private license. (3) There is now wording that defines chemical trespass. You must have permission to apply pesticides to land of another. In one example, an upset neighbor fumigated his neighbor's bean field on purpose with Banvel while driving down the road. If caught, this is now a criminal offense in the Nebraska Pesticide Act.

In 2002, the EPA proposed new anti-drift label language that contained a maximum allowable wind speed, boom height maximum and minimum droplet sizes. They received 6,000 comments at the hearings across the country and we haven't heard a word since. Testifying at these hearings does work.



Letters were recently sent out by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture requesting an audit of restricted use pesticide records from farmers. A local farmer by DeWitt called last week and said he was one of the lucky few that received a letter. Farmers are asked to record brand name, EPA registration number, total amount applied, crop treated, field location, acres treated, application date and your name and certification number in these records. These records are to be kept for 3 years on restricted products, subject to spot check. If you need some record books, we have them in our office at no charge.

For more information of pesticide rules and regulations, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office, in Saline at 821-2151, or call the Department of Agriculture at 1-877-800-4080.

Randy Pryor, Extension Educator
University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Saline County
306 West 3rd Street, Wilber, NE 68465
Phone (402) 821-2151 • Fax (402) 821-3398 • e-mail: randy.pryor@unl.edu