

Handling Pesticides with Success

Pesticides can be defined as any toxic chemical that is used to suppress, control or kill pests. I am totally sold out on the fact that pesticides are toxic substances and that we should always take extra precautionary measures to protect people including the applicators, pets, plants and the environment at large from the harmful effect of pesticides.

The first step in using pesticides is to properly identify the pest and then select the right pesticide to get the job done. Before using any pesticide always read the label; “the label is the law” It is important to note that you should not only depend on the information that is given to you by the sale representatives at the time of purchase.

Driving around the neighborhood I frequently observed both homeowners and commercial pesticide applicators applying pesticides without dressing appropriately. Pesticides applicators often get friendly with the chemical after using it a few times by not dressing appropriately. I would like to remind us that pesticides are not pets or people; your time spent with it will not make it less harmful. I cannot overstate that dressing appropriately is very vital to the health of people, pest and the environment.

Appropriate dressing in relate pesticides application is simply wearing a heavy duty chemical resistant rubber gloves; a household or medical gloves does not provide adequate protection. In addition, always wear a long sleeve shirt and attire with an under shirt for added body protection, a long pants, shoes and socks are also essential. When applying pesticides, it is encouraged to wear a pair of tall rubber boot with long pants covering the boot on the outside. It is always important to wear eye protection when handling pesticides, especially liquid or if handling dust or granules on a windy day. It is also good not to wear the same clothes more than once before getting it to the wash; pesticides get in contact with clothes without knowing. Clothes that are worn to apply pesticides should be placed separately in a container from other garments. Clothes should also be washed separately.

Another serious concern that came to mind is; people who handle pesticides often involved with bad habits such as smoke while applying pesticides, eat without properly washing their hands, and don't wash their hands before using the restroom. Homeowners sometimes practice storing pesticides in soda bottles which can be mistaken by children and others as refreshments which may result in fatality. Finally, people and pets should stay away from areas that are wet with pesticides, preferably for at least 24 hours.

For more information on pesticides and other related horticulture topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000 or email at gricketts@ufl.edu.