Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Pack 10, Item 10

Type: Script

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**Pesticide safety, part 1: Handle with care**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Chile, Colombia, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Mexico, Paraguay, Philippines, St. Lucia, and Sri Lanka.

Presenter: George Atkins

**Special notes**

1. Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

2. This item and Item 11 give important general guidelines to be followed when working with pesticides. Please note that pesticide containers, labels, etc., should be consulted for more specific advice for each product.

3. The subject "Pesticide safety" is very important. It could even be a matter of life and death for the farm people you serve. The information has been divided into 2 parts (Items 10 and 11). Both are rather lengthy and are provided in a form that could be further subdivided into several shorter items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a worldwide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on health and safety and ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today our subject is pesticide safety. Here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** For you today, I have some important information about

chemical pesticides. Chemicals are used, of course, to deal with many kinds of pests—with insects, rats and mice, with weeds and plant diseases.

Many of these chemical materials can be dangerous, especially if they're not used properly. Did you know that every year people die because of chemical pesticides? And many others get sick from them?

That's because pesticides are poisons. Although pesticides are meant to kill pests, they can also be harmful to other living things—to people, animals, birds, and fish. They can also kill honey bees and other useful insects that attack the kinds of insects that bother us. Some pesticides are more dangerous than others. There are some that are fairly safe—if you use them properly. If you don't use chemical pesticides properly, however, your body can be quite easily affected by them and you could get sick or even die.

To make sure that poisonous chemicals don't get into your body, take these precautions:

\* Don't eat or drink anything that might have pesticide on it or in it.

\* Don't spill or spray pesticide on your skin—it could burn your skin or go through your skin into your body.

\* Don't breathe in any pesticide spray or fumes or pesticide dust.

\* Don't get chemical pesticides in your eyes.

*The effect of chemical pesticides on people*

What happens if pesticide gets into your body? Well, that may depend on how much of the chemical got into your body or onto your skin. It may also depend on what kind it was, because some are more harmful than others.

If a chemical pesticide gets into your body, you might feel the effects right away, or you might not. You might feel weak and dizzy or sick. Your stomach might hurt, and you might vomit or get diarrhea. Your head might hurt, and you could have trouble seeing clearly or thinking properly. You might start shaking or you might faint. And if it was a very strong poison or a large quantity of a weaker poison, you could even die. Perhaps you know of someone who has been sick or even has died because of a chemical pesticide.

Here's something you might not know. Even if you don't get sick right away, a pesticide may stay in your body and make you sick later, perhaps months or even years after you used it. If you're not careful every time you use a pesticide, more of it may get into your body and stay there, and that could be very bad for your health.

So you must always be careful when handling pesticides not to get them on your skin or in your body.

*The importance of the label on the container*

Here's something you should do before you use any pesticide.

Find out exactly how to use it. There should always be instructions on the container. Be sure you understand everything those instructions tell you. If you don't understand them, find someone who does. Be sure you know what they say and follow the instructions.

If there are no instructions from the pesticide company on the container, try to get them from the company or an extension agent. This is important for different reasons. For example, for some pesticides, the instructions will say that you must be wearing special safety equipment such as a mask or eye goggles when working with them. You must know things like this before you buy a pesticide. If the container has no instructions on it, or if you have no way of finding out how to use the chemical safely, don't buy it—it may not be safe for you to use. Try to get the safest pesticide you can. And use it properly.

*Some rules for handling pesticides*

Now here are some basic rules to follow whenever you're handling chemical pesticides:

First, store them safely, in a place where children or animals can't possibly get to them. Never store pesticides in a food container, and be sure that the container they are in is marked in a way that anyone would know it has poison in it, and that it's dangerous. Keep any chemical pesticide you have away from food and drink, including feed and water for animals. Never eat or drink or smoke while handling pesticides. And don't eat food crops that have recently been sprayed or dusted with a chemical pesticide. When you're using pesticides, don't breathe in any of the fumes, spray, or dust and don't get any of this chemical material on your skin. Be careful not to spray it on other people or animals.

*In case of accident*

Now, if anybody accidentally swallows some pesticide, you must get help right away from a doctor or health worker. Take the original pesticide container to them, so they'll know which pesticide you were using and what treatment to try.

If, by any chance, some pesticide gets on your skin, wash it off right away with fresh water. The longer the poison is on a person's skin, the more dangerous it may be—so don't wait! If it's also on your clothes or in your gloves or shoes, take them off right away, and wash the pesticide off your skin. Then wash the clothes too.

If you get pesticide in your eye, wash it out right away with clean water. First wash your hands, then hold open the eyelids and gently pour clean water into the eye. Continue doing this for at least 10 minutes. After this, it would be a good idea to go to your nearest doctor or health worker.

*Proper washing is very important*

After handling pesticides, always wash yourself well with soap and water before you do anything else. It's especially important to wash your hands and face. You should also wash your hair and the rest of your body.

The clothes you were wearing when you were working with the pesticide must also be washed. Wash them in a container, separately from other clothes; and whoever washes the clothes should also wash their arms and hands afterwards. Don't let a woman wash these clothes if she's going to have a baby or is nursing a baby, because some chemical pesticides are particularly harmful to babies.

Now don't do any of this washing near streams or wells. You must not let chemical pesticides get into water that people or animals might use for drinking, washing, or even bathing.

*Special danger to babies, children, and women*

I said a moment ago that chemical pesticides are especially dangerous to babies. They are also very dangerous to children. Never let them use pesticides or go near them. Keep children away when you're preparing and applying pesticides and never let them use or play with the containers.

I also said a moment ago that a woman who is going to have a baby or is nursing a baby should not wash clothes that may have pesticide on them. Certainly she should never handle or work with pesticides or go near them either. The pesticide could harm her unborn baby; or if she's nursing a baby, it could affect her milk and be bad for the baby.

*In conclusion*

In general, then, try not to use chemical pesticides any more than you need to. Use other pest control methods whenever you can. However, if you also do use chemical pesticides, choose the safest ones you can. And be sure to use them properly.

People who really know a lot about pesticides know they must be careful when they handle them. They know that otherwise they may be putting themselves or others in danger. So always be careful!

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. This item is the first of two items in this package on the subject of pesticide safety. If they are relevant to the farmers you serve, please use the items in the correct sequence.

2. Identifying the major pests and understanding their life cycles is a vital first step in deciding when and how to control the pests, by "chemical" pesticide or by "non-chemical" means. You may therefore wish to use this item in association with information from:

Knowing Insect Life Cycles Helps You Control Pests - DCFRN Package 10, Item 8.

3. For safety and economy, it would be best if farmers could deal with their pest problems with non-chemical pest control methods as much as possible and then only use chemical pesticides when absolutely necessary. This is safer and can be more effective than relying only on chemical pesticides. To encourage your farmers in the use of non-chemical methods of control, you may wish to use this item in association with information from:

Preventing Insect Pest Damage to Crops - Package 10, Item 9.