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Proper Pesticide Use

One of the more important instructions typically provided with many pesticide recommendations is: always read and follow label directions. It's a reminder that pesticides *do* have a label and that the label governs that pesticide's use.

KSU Pesticide Safety and Integrated Pest Management Coordinator Frannie Miller works to provide applicator training throughout the year, with a part of that education focused on the laws governing product labels and how to meet restrictions associated with them. Through her work she has summarized the importance of abiding by label restrictions into a few simple steps.

First, labels help ensure safety. What is required for personal protective equipment? How do we minimize pesticide exposure? What is the cleanup process for the sprayer post application? The label provides guidelines to answer these questions - and many others - to keep everyone from the applicator to the home/landowner to the innocent bystander safe.

Second, labels are not only designed for safety from the standpoint of direct human exposure, but also for safety surrounding the areas they are applied to and the food or feed products that may be produced from those areas. A lot of research goes into testing formulations that can be used in a manner safe for our food system. Off label uses can reduce that safety.

Finally, label instructions are designed to ensure product use success while being safe for the environment and economically viable. Misapplication can be a hindrance to all of the above, while causing other issues as well.

Pesticide applications don't have to be scary – that's the reason for the research put into their use. They do, however, deserve respect. Making sure to understand product labels is a great way to use products safely and keep them viable for the future.

Rather *not* use a pesticide? Research into alternatives to pesticides is on the increase, with additional options available every day. Most research would suggest increasing variability in the level of control from many non-pesticide options, but there are possibilities for many different situations, and at the very least can provide an integrated management approach to many of our common pest problems.