



COLORADO ENVIRONMENTAL PESTICIDE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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READING PESTICIDE LABELS

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This fact sheet details how to read a pesticide label.

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Reading Pesticide Labels

If a chemical is used for “Pest Control”, there are certain regulations which apply to the instruction label. Labels vary in length, but all contain the same type of information (see Pesticide Fact Sheet [The Pesticide Label](#)). The label allows you to get maximum benefits with minimal risk. It will instruct you on application and will identify the active ingredient in case of a pesticide accident.

Federal law strictly defines what information manufacturers must put on pesticide labels. The label helps the state and federal governments control the distribution, storage, sale, use, and disposal of pesticides. Before a manufacturer can sell a pesticide, the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) must approve its label language. In Colorado, the [Department of Agriculture](#) must accept label language before a product can be sold or used in the state.

ALWAYS READ THE ENTIRE LABEL before each step in the application of the pesticide.

Following are the contents of Pesticide labels:

- The **common name** – a brief name in place of a long chemical name.
- The **brand name** – a name the company gives the pesticide. The same pesticide can be sold by different companies under different names.
- The **active ingredient** – the component in the pesticides making it lethal to pests.
- The **EPA registration number** – a number assigned by the EPA which shows that the pesticide was approved by the EPA.
- **Signal words** – the words or symbols like “Caution,” “Warning,” “Danger,” or “Poison” indicating how toxic or hazardous a pesticide is.
- **Precautionary statement** – describes what protective clothing is necessary during application or other necessary precautions that should be taken.
- **Statements of practical treatment** – explains what first aid is needed if pesticide exposure has occurred.
- **Directions for use** – tells the consumer how to use the pesticide most efficiently.
- **Storage and disposal** – explains how to store and dispose of the pesticide safely.



Pesticide labels are the law!

Make sure you thoroughly understand the label instructions on selection, mixing, usage, storage, and proper disposal **before** you apply the pesticide. Contact the manufacturer, or local extension office for more information.

References and Resources

Baker, D. E., October 1993. *Homeowner chemical safety*. Doc. GO1918, University Extension, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

How to Read a Pesticide Label and Why. January 1997. California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Sacramento, CA.

How To Read and Understand a Pesticide Label. Agricultural Retailers Association, Professional Applicator Institute, Professional Training Seminars, Washington, D.C.

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