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Fact Sheet on the Pest Management Regulatory Agency

November 2001

What does the PMRA do?

All products designed to manage, destroy, attract or repel pests that are used, sold or imported into Canada are regulated by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA). These products include chemicals, devices, and even organisms, and are referred to collectively as pest control products, or simply "pesticides." The federal legislative authority for the regulation of pesticides in Canada is the Pest Control Products Act. The use of pesticides is also subject to regulation under provincial/territorial legislation.

Some examples of pesticides are:

- > Herbicides (for the control of weeds)
- > Insecticides (for the control of insects)
- > Fungicides (for the control of mould and other fungi)

Other pesticides that fall under the Pest Control Products Act include:

- > Swimming pool algicides
- > Disinfectant and sanitiser cleaners
- > Material preservatives
- > Wood preservatives
- > Animal and insect repellents
- > Electronic insect or rodent devices

Pesticides play an important role in maintaining Canada's food supply and the quality of life of Canadians, as well as supporting sectors of the economy such as forestry.

The PMRA:

- > reviews applications for the registration of pest control products;
- > conducts science-based health, environmental and value (including efficacy) assessments of each pesticide before deciding if it should be approved for use in Canada;
- > develops and implements policies and guidelines related to pest management;
- > promotes sustainable pest management;
- > seeks efficiencies in the processing of registration applications through such means as international harmonization and electronic submission and review of pesticide registration data;
- > enforces compliance with the *Pest Control Products Act*; and
- > disseminates information on pest management issues to the public.

By seeking to minimize the risks associated with pesticides, the PMRA helps protect human health, safety and the environment.

Why was the Agency created?

The PMRA was created on April 1, 1995 as part of an ongoing government effort to establish a reformed pest management regime in Canada. The Agency's mandate and organization reflect the views expressed during a cross-Canada consultation with provinces and territories, the general public, users, pesticide producers and health, environmental and labour groups. In creating the PMRA, staff and resources for pest management regulation from four federal departments—Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Health Canada—were consolidated into a single agency within Health Canada.

How are pesticides regulated?

Before a pesticide is considered for registration in Canada, it must undergo extensive testing to determine the potential risks posed to human health and the environment and the pesticide's value. Determining value includes assessing the efficacy of a product—whether it does what it claims to do and at what rate it should be applied—as well as examining the potential social and economic impact of registering the product.

It is the responsibility of the manufacturer to carry out these detailed scientific tests and studies. The manufacturer then submits all data and results to the PMRA with an application for registration.

The PMRA carefully reviews this information to determine if the product is acceptable for use in Canada. The Agency's decision to register or deny registration is based on an objective scientific assessment of the risks (health and environmental) and the value of the pest control product.

The PMRA has four science-based divisions and a laboratory that undertake these risk and value assessments and make product registration decisions—Efficacy and Sustainability Assessment, Health Evaluation, Environmental Assessment and Alternative Strategies and Regulatory Affairs. The Alternative Strategies and Regulatory Affairs

How can pesticides be used safely?

Division is also responsible for supporting the development and adoption of sustainable pest management strategies.

The health and environmental assessments carried out by PMRA evaluators address the following questions.

- ▶ Where, how and by whom will the pest control product be used?
- ▶ What is its toxicity?
- ▶ Are there any potential health hazards to users or bystanders?
- ▶ Will our food and drinking water be affected?
- ▶ What is the impact on the environment?

Assessing value helps establish the lowest effective rate at which pesticides can be applied. The less pesticide used, the less risk there is to health and the environment.

The PMRA also inspects and investigates the sale, importation and use of pesticides and enforces the *Pest Control Products Act* through a network of regional officers and inspectors across the country. This work is done in cooperation with provincial and territorial governments and other federal departments.

Even commonly used household products such as cleaners and painkillers are potentially hazardous if used improperly. Directions on the labels of these products tell us how much to use and what precautions we should take to avoid injury. Pesticides are no different. The detailed use directions that appear on the label or on leaflets attached to the product are the result of the extensive tests and studies carried out prior to registration. Remember, a pesticide is registered for use in Canada only if:

- ▶ sufficient data has been provided to assess the safety and value of the product;
- ▶ a scientific review of this data shows that the human health and environmental risks associated with its proposed use are acceptable; and,
- ▶ a value assessment has determined the efficacy of the product, which establishes that the product does what it claims to do and sets the lowest effective application rate.

Labels on pest control products also contain vital information on first-aid, product disposal and clean-up of spills. To protect the environment, your property, your health—and that of your children, pets, neighbours and community—carefully follow label instructions on all pesticides.

How do I get more information on pesticides?

For a more detailed explanation of how the PMRA evaluates pesticides, please consult the PMRA Overview document. For more information on specific pest control solutions, see the Pest Notes series. These publications and other general and regulatory documents are available by contacting:

Pest Management Regulatory Agency
2720 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9
Fax: (613) 736-3798
E-mail: pmra_infoserv@hc-sc.gc.ca
Or visit our web site at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla

The PMRA also provides a Pest Management Information Service at: 1-800-267-6315 from within Canada, or (613) 736-3799 from outside Canada. This service answers inquiries about the federal pesticide registration process in Canada, federal regulations, Canada's initiatives in the area of pesticides and pesticide labelling and safety precautions.

Pest Management Regulatory Agency
2720 Riverside Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9

Pest Management Information Service
Telephone: 1-800-267-6315
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*Long distance charges apply.
Fax: (613) 736-3798
E-mail: pmra_infoserv@hc-sc.gc.ca
Internet: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pmra-arla

Canada