

Code of Best Practice No. 1 Using Pesticides in Farms and Vegetable Gardens

This Code of Best Practice doesn't provide exact solutions to the problems of managing pests and weeds, but following its practical guidance will help to protect sprayers, members of the public and consumers of treated produce from the potentially harmful effects of pesticides.

The main risks

Pesticides are valuable tools for agricultural production but only when used in a responsible manner. A pesticide is a poison when misused can cause considerable harm. The main risks when applying pesticides in farms, gardens and orchards are to:

- The person spraying the pesticide, if they don't take care
- Other users of the area being sprayed such as children, pets and other animals
- Everyone downstream through contamination of water courses
- Everyone eating the fruit or vegetables if pesticide residues remain in the produce

This code of practice is intended to guide you in applying pesticides to avoid these harmful effects.

Who is this code of best practice for?

For all farmers and gardeners using insecticides, fungicides and selective herbicides to manage pests and weeds in farms and vegetable gardens, either their own or spraying pesticides for others. It is also for people spraying herbicides to control weeds on farm headlands.

Good practice in farms and vegetable gardens

- Choose the **right pesticide** or it may not work, make sure you have correctly identified the problem. For example, it's no good using a caterpillar spray if the pests are mites.
- If possible, select a product which doesn't harm **natural enemies** and biological control agents – help them to keep working for you.
- Always respect the **harvest interval** specified in the label for that product on that crop.
- The best **time of day** to spray is early in the morning when it is cooler.
- Vegetable gardens often have different crops planted quite close to each other. Make sure a spray intended for one crop doesn't **drift** over and damage another or get into produce ready for harvest. This can be done by using shields, using a low-drift nozzle and/or holding the applicator lance low over the crop.
- Knapsack sprayers need to be **well cleaned** between using different products, especially when switching between herbicides and insecticides. It's best to have two dedicated sprayers, one for herbicides and one for insecticides. Fungicides can be applied in the insecticide sprayer.

Crops should be monitored regularly, at least once a week checking for any signs of pests, diseases, weeds, mineral deficiencies and any other problems, as well as looking out for natural enemies which may be helping to protect the crop.

Things to look out for

- Is there a **stream or other water course** nearby? Don't let your pesticides poison the water supplies.
- Are there any **ponds or troughs** which could be poisoned and affect livestock? Don't let spray drift over.
- Do **livestock or pets** use the area you are going to spray? Keep them away from the area for at least 2 weeks after treatment.
- Do **other people** use the area you are going to spray? Inform them or put up warning signs for at least 2 weeks after treatment.

The basics

- Always **read the label** and follow the instructions for dose rate, frequency of application, harvest interval and the personal protective equipment required.
- Choose the correct **nozzle** for the job, check the product label.
- Make sure you are using the right **personal protective equipment** for the product.
- Avoid walking through **wet vegetation** you've just sprayed, you're poisoning yourself.
- Avoid walking through an **unsprayed crop or vegetation** after applying a pesticide and wearing the same coveralls or protective clothing.
- Don't spray if it is **too windy, too hot or too wet**. You are only wasting effort and money and could cause harm through over-stressing the crop, or drift.
- Avoid spraying on steep or **very rough terrain**, the weight of the sprayer can pull you over.
- Dispose of **rinsings** from the knapsack sprayer on or at the edge of the area treated, but avoid exceeding the recommended dose rate on the target itself.
- Store pesticides in a **lockable store** away from food stuffs, and out of the reach of children and pets.

Advice and further information

- Contact the Farmer Support Team or Pest Control Services Officer at ANRD on 24724 for advice on pesticides, diagnosis of crop pests and diseases and general crop production.
- UK Pesticides page: <http://www.pesticides.gov.uk>
- Plantwise Knowledge bank, a global resource to help combat plant health problems: <http://www.plantwise.org>