

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

What It Is, How It Works, and Why Pesticides Must Remain an Option

It All Began on the Farm

Some two decades ago, farmers, working in cooperation with crop scientists, began to develop a series of innovative approaches to effectively control pests while managing the use of pesticides. Collectively this new system became known as Integrated Pest Management. IPM is a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimizes health and environmental risks. IPM also is site and pest specific, taking into account all relevant control tactics and locally available methods. For farmers and pest and turf management professionals, IPM provides the most effective, environmentally sound and socially acceptable method of managing diseases, insects, weeds and other pests.

IPM also calls for farmers to employ alternative, non-chemical means to reduce the likelihood of pest infestation whenever practical and to fight pests should they emerge. These effects range from the destruction of pest nesting areas, to the use of “beneficials” (insects that eat unwanted pests), to stationing pheromones, or “mating perfumes,” which disrupt insect reproductive cycles. IPM has been consistently and enthusiastically supported by the pesticide industry.

Applying IPM Strategies in Schools

While IPM strategies and programs were developed primarily for use by farmers, the same practices also are highly effective in public health situations such as keeping schools free of harmful pests. IPM calls for pest prevention



through indirect measures such as maintenance and sanitation, pest observation through monitoring and using other diagnostic tools such as traps to determine levels of infestation, and through direct intervention measures. The goal of prevention is to reduce the severity and risk of pest infestation and harm, while observation is used to determine when and what action to take. Intervention becomes necessary when pest populations and associated health

risks exceed acceptable thresholds and may include mechanical, biological or chemical control measures, used individually or in combination, taking into consideration a variety of factors including benefits, timing and ecological and environmental effects.

In the school environment, the threshold for allowing the presence of dangerous or disease-carrying pests

may be quite low – or even zero, in the case of rats in cafeterias, for example.

It’s the Law: IPM Includes the Use of Chemical Tools

Recently, there have been attempts to redefine IPM as a process that expressly prohibits *any* pesticide use – even when pests pose substantial health risks. Fortunately, federal law clearly defines IPM as including the use of pesticides:

“Integrated Pest Management is a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health and environmental risks.” [emphasis added] 110 STAT. 1512 PUBLIC LAW 104-170, August 3, 1996¹

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also defines IPM as including the use of pesticides, again, after the monitoring of pest populations indicates a need.² In fact, in its publication "Pest Control in the School Environment, Adopting Integrated Pest Management," the Agency states:

*"IPM programs take advantage of all pest management options possibly including, but not limited to, the judicious use of pesticides."*³

Proposals to Ban Pesticide Use in Schools Could Compromise Children's Health

Proposals to ban pesticides use in schools, or to wrongly redefine what IPM means, aren't just bad policies, they could jeopardize children's health. Pests such as cockroaches, fire ants, wasps, mosquitoes and rats and mice can seriously injure and sicken millions of people. Schoolchildren are especially vulnerable. Pesticides must continue to be included as an available option of thoughtful, well-implemented IPM programs.

Reference Notes

1. Food Quality Protection Act, 110 Stat. 1512 Public Law 104-170, "Title III Data Collection Activities To Assure The Health Of Infants And Children And Other Measures," 7 USC 136r-1, SEC. 303, August 3, 1996.
2. "Joint Statement on Mosquito Control in the United States," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention news release, January 30, 2001.
3. "Pest Control in the School Environment: Adopting Integrated Pest Management," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pesticide Programs (H7506C), August 1993, page 2.