

F A C T S H E E T

WHY SCHOOL PESTICIDE BANS WOULD COMPROMISE CHILDREN'S HEALTH "All or Nothing" Positions Miss the Point – Use Pesticides Judiciously, But Have Them Available When Needed

Recently, proposals have surfaced calling for a complete ban on pesticide use in schools; requiring that only the "least toxic" pesticides be used; or seeking to redefine Integrated Pest Management to exclude any pesticide use whatsoever. These proposals are impractical and, at their worst, counterproductive, denying those charged with safeguarding schools an essential set of tools for controlling dangerous pests that threaten our children's health and safety. What's called for is common sense – use pesticides only when necessary but have them available if needed.

Rats, cockroaches, stinging insects and other pests seriously threaten the health and safety of our children and all citizens.

These pests spread serious and sometimes fatal diseases, contaminate food, cause asthma and allergies, and can be deadly with their bites and stings. It is an essential public health priority that they be adequately controlled and that our children be safeguarded.

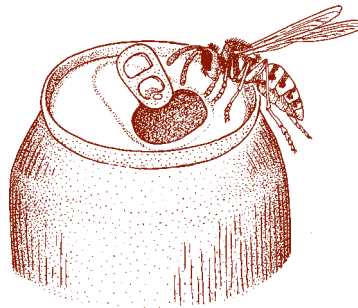
Pesticides are crucial tools in efforts to safeguard children from dangerous pests.

Pesticides should seldom be considered the first and only means to control pests. But they are frequently an essential – and sometimes the only – means to reduce the threat of rats, cockroaches, fire ants, wasps and other pests to an acceptable minimum. Non-pesticide means of pest control are important but are often not sufficient on their own.

Most of the pesticides used to control pests in schools are no different from those millions of Americans use in their homes.

There is a misconception that pesticides used in and around the schools are "stronger," "industrial strength" or "more toxic" than what millions of people use to protect their yards and homes from harmful pests. Not true. The

vast majority consist of the same formulations contained in products purchased at supermarkets and hardware stores.



Federal law defines Integrated Pest Management – which is universally accepted as the most thoughtful approach to pest control – as including pesticide use when necessary.

IPM first and foremost considers best measures, including non-pesticidal methods, to reduce or combat the presence of pests. But, if a pest outbreak exceeds a certain level, then targeted safe and responsible pesticide use is appropriate. At times, pesticides are the only effective means to reduce the risk of injury or disease. Both federal law and the Environmental Protection Agency define IPM as including pesticide use when necessary.

Pesticides are thoroughly tested, well regulated, safely used and effectively monitored.

In recent years, Congress and the EPA have significantly strengthened pesticide regulation. New products must

pass up to 120 health, safety and environment tests before being granted registration. Recently, federal safety standards have been expanded to further safeguard vulnerable populations, including children. National poison control center data consistently show that poisonings are extremely rare.¹

The “least toxic” doctrine flies in the face of a fundamental law of disease prevention – never allow the targeted pest or disease to survive treatment. Survival only makes pests or diseases resistant, resulting in additional treatments.

Once it has been decided that pesticides are a necessary intervention, the operating principle should be to use the most effective product to eradicate the pests. Using so-called “least toxic” pesticides can promote resistance and make it even harder to do the job. Selecting the appropriate pesticide and following label directions will result in effective pest management and reduced risk.

Reference Notes

1. American Association of Poison Control Centers, 1999 AAPCC TESS Report, www.aapcc.org/1999.htm.