

Look What's Out There

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Illegal Pesticide Products

You may have seen people selling them on the street or in small neighborhood stores. They go by names like Tres Pasitos or Chalk, and they come with a guarantee to kill roaches, mice and other household pests like nothing else on the market. But most such products are illegal. And illegal pesticides can hurt much more than roaches. They can harm you and your family.

Illegal pesticides are often much more toxic than registered pesticides -- those pesticides that EPA has approved -- after strict testing - - for use in your home. They often come in familiar shapes and packaging. EPA has identified illegal flea and tick repellents for pets, antibacterial cleansers, mothballs, and other products that claim to get rid of household pests.

Across the country, EPA has initiated an effort to protect consumers from these products. In areas where illegal products are an acute problem, EPA has increased enforcement actions against companies selling or distributing illegal household pesticides. EPA has also increased efforts to raise public awareness of these product dangers.

Why be concerned?

Many illegal pesticides are very toxic. Others contain unknown ingredients, or the ingredients may vary from time to time. Some of the illegal products are also available to the public in legal, EPA registered versions. However, consumers may unknowingly purchase or obtain the illegal versions. Though the illegal products may look similar to and make the same

claims as their legal counterparts, these products have not been thoroughly tested. And since the products are unregistered, their labels have not been reviewed for clear directions and safety warnings.

Common Illegal Pest Products

mothballs | insecticidal chalk | pet products | "Tres Pasitos" | antibacterial products

Illegal naphthalene moth repellent products -- mothballs -- pose a hazard to young children. Mothballs can be easily mistaken for candy, or simply tempt young children to touch and play with them. Recent studies have linked naphthalene to illnesses, including nasal cancer. Widespread sale and distribution of these products make illegal mothballs a particular concern.

Illegal Insecticide Chalk is also known as "Miraculous Chalk" or "Chinese Chalk." You may have seen the chalk in a neighborhood store or sold on the street for about \$1 a box. It is mostly imported illegally from China and often bears a label in both English and Chinese. Sometimes the manufacturer claims that the chalk is "harmless to human beings and animals" and "safe to use." These claims are untrue and dangerous.

Illegal Pet Products, including foreign-labeled, unregistered versions of the common pet products Advantage and Frontline, have been illegally imported and sold throughout the U.S. Though registered for use in other countries, some foreign-labeled versions have omitted important warnings, especially those pertaining to children, that are required

in the U.S. Versions imported from such countries as England and Australia often give doses in metric units, which can cause Americans to accidentally over-dose or under-dose pets.

"Tres Pasitos" is imported illegally from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Its name means "three little steps" in English, because after eating it, this is all mice can muster before dying. The active ingredient (or the chemical that actually kills the pest) in "Tres Pasitos" is a chemical called aldicarb. EPA considers aldicarb to be a very toxic chemical - and one that should never be used in your home. Children are especially vulnerable to poisoning by aldicarb when it is sprinkled around the home to control roaches, mice and rats. Exposure to high amounts of aldicarb can cause weakness, blurred vision, headache, nausea, tearing, sweating, and tremors in people. Very high doses can kill people, because it can paralyze the respiratory system. What "Tres Pasitos" does to pests, it can also do to you.

Antibacterial products. Many common household products, ranging from cleansers to cutting boards, claim to protect against bacteria. Such claims are illegal unless the product is registered with EPA or the claim only applies to protecting the item itself from damage by microorganisms, not to provide additional health benefits. In addition, the pesticide used to treat the item must be registered for use in or on the treated item.

What You Should Do

There are many other illegal pesticides sold on the street and in some small neighborhood stores. All of them should be avoided. You have no way of knowing how dangerous an unregistered pesticide is, because it is not subject to testing requirements or manufacturing controls that registration provides.

looking for a pesticide to use in your home:

Look for an EPA registration number on the pesticide's container. This number tells you that EPA has reviewed health and environmental information about the pesticide, and if the label says so, that the product is okay to use in your home.

Look for a list of the active ingredients on the label. Any product registered with EPA must state the active ingredients on the label.

Trust your instincts. If a person offers you a product on the street, chances are it is illegal and could harm you and your family. Shop for pesticides only in stores you know and trust. If the shopkeeper gives you a product that is packed or wrapped suspiciously, don't buy it.

Contact the EPA Regional Pesticide unit that covers your location. EPA is happy to answer any questions you might have about pesticides you are thinking of using in your home. You can also call the National Pesticide Information Center at 1-800-858-7378.

Be aware that EPA registers some pesticides (like farm pesticides) that are not meant to be used in the home. Look for information on the label that states that the product can be used by the general public, indoors, in the home.

When you do find a pesticide that is registered with EPA for use in your home, always remember to read the label first. EPA reviews all pesticide labels before products can be sold. If you follow all the label directions, you will reduce your risk of harming yourself and the environment. The label provides important information you need to protect yourself and the children in your care." (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Region 9, 2004).

Here are some simple rules to follow when

Chemical News

- Michigan passes laws governing aquatic pesticide use: Two new laws in Michigan will stiffen penalties for pesticide permit violations and tighten the rules for the state's review of permit applications for aquatic nuisance control. The bills, signed into law last month by Gov. Jennifer Granholm (D), were forged in negotiations between the state Department of Environmental Quality, the legislature and pesticide applicators (Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News: Thursday, August 19, 2004 Volume 6, Issue 160).

- Court says Dow Chemical invented Bt biotech trait: A U.S. District Court in San Diego, Calif., ruled Aug. 13 that a subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Co. was the first to invent the insect resistance trait Cry1F, which is based on Bacillus thuringiensis genes (Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News: Thursday, August 19, 2004 Volume 6, Issue 160).

- EPA Revises the WPS Glove Requirements for Workers, Handlers and Pilots: EPA signed the final rule amending the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) for agricultural pesticides to make the following two changes: (1) All agricultural workers (harvesters, cultivators, pesticide handlers) are permitted to wear separable glove liners beneath chemical-resistant gloves; and (2) Agricultural pilots do not have to wear chemical-resistant gloves when entering or exiting aircraft. Workers may choose when to wear the liners. The liners may not be longer than the chemical-resistant glove and they may not extend outside the glove. The liners must be disposed of after 10 hours of use, or whenever the liners become contaminated. Lined or flocked gloves, where the lining is attached to the inside of the chemical resistant outer glove remain unacceptable. Regulatory action was taken to reduce the discomfort of unlined chemical resistant gloves, especially during hot or cold periods. Additionally, chemically resistant gloves do not add any appreciable protection against minimal pesticide residues

found around the cockpit of an aircraft. The WPS applies to workers performing hand labor activities in fields treated with pesticides, workers on farms, forests, nurseries and greenhouses where pesticides are used, and pesticide handlers who mix, load, apply or otherwise handle pesticides. The Federal Register notice containing the final rule is available at:

<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/index.htm>.

(US-EPA, Pesticide News. Sept. 01, 2004)

- FDA says egg safety proposal would reduce salmonellosis: FDA said Sept. 20 its proposed rule to improve shell egg safety on the farm would significantly reduce the near 118,000 illnesses per year caused by eggs contaminated with Salmonella enteritidis (Food Chemical News: Wednesday, September 22, 2004, Volume 6, Issue 183).

- USDA BSE testing program tops 60,000 As of Sept. 19, USDA had tested 62,294 cattle as part of its expanded BSE surveillance program, according to numbers from the agency's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (Food Chemical News: Friday, September 24, 2004, Volume 6, Issue 185).

- Dow AgroSciences has notified the EPA that they will cancel their Reldan® (chlorpyrifos-methyl) registrations. (Agricultural Chemical News, 8/15/04).

- Bayer CropScience has notified the EPA that they will eliminate poultry use from their Sevin® (carbaryl) product labels. (Agricultural Chemical News, 8/15/04).

- Bell Labs has introduced Talpirid® (bromethalin) as a new mole control product for use in lawns around homes and ornamental gardens. (Agricultural Chemical News, 8/15/04).