



## What You Should Know About Pesticide Use at Penn State

### What are Pesticides?

Pesticides are substances intended to control, destroy, repel, or attract a pest. Pests can be animals (like mice or insects), unwanted plants (weeds), or microorganisms (like plant diseases, bacteria, or viruses). Though often misunderstood to refer only to insecticides, the term pesticide also applies to herbicides, fungicides, and various other substances used to control pests. Many household products are pesticides. All of these common products are considered pesticides:

- Cockroach sprays and baits
- Insect repellents for personal use
- Rat and other rodent poisons
- Flea and tick sprays, powders, and pet collars
- Kitchen, laundry, and bath disinfectants and sanitizers (such as bleach)
- Products that kill mold and mildew (such as Lysol)
- Some lawn and garden products, such as weed killers
- Some swimming pool chemicals

### Why does Penn State Use Pesticides?

At Penn State, pesticides are used for various purposes to protect human health and in landscaping and agriculture, including for insect, rodent, and weed control. However, before a pesticide is used, other non-toxic preventative measures are used to attempt to get rid of the pest. These methods, which are part of a program called “Integrated Pest Management” are intended to first attempt to eliminate the pest by cultural (e.g., sanitation and habitat change), physical (e.g., screens, crack sealing), and biological (e.g., predators and parasites) methods. If these are not effective at reducing the numbers of pests below acceptable levels, then pesticides may be used.

### Is Pesticide Use at Penn State Safe?

Pesticide use is strictly controlled. Although pesticides are designed to be toxic to their target pests, at Penn State the least toxic pesticide to accomplish the job is selected. All pesticide applications are performed under the direction of a certified pesticide applicator. These applicators have been trained in the proper use of pesticides and in how to ensure that these applications pose minimal risk to both the applicators and the public. You may notice employees who are using pesticides wearing respirators, gloves or other special clothing. This is to ensure they are protected while in direct contact during handling and use. The Penn State Pesticide Management Program provides oversight for all pesticide storage and use throughout the University.

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