

News Releases - Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals

CONSUMER ALERT: EPA Advises Care When Selecting Pesticides for Bedbug Control

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WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) wants to alert consumers that there has been an increase of individuals or companies who offer to control bedbugs with unrealistic promises of effectiveness or low cost. Because bed bug infestations are so difficult to control, there have been situations where pesticides that are not intended for indoor residential applications have been improperly used or applied at greater rates than the label allows. While controlling bedbugs is challenging, consumers should never use, or allow anyone else to use, a pesticide indoors that is intended for outdoor use, as indicated on the label. Using the wrong pesticide or using it incorrectly to treat for bedbugs can make you, your family, and your pets sick. It can also make your home unsafe to live in – and may not solve the bedbug problem.

Bedbugs can cause itchy bites on people and pets. Unlike most public-health pests, however, bed bugs are not known to transmit or spread diseases. Pesticides are only one tool to use in getting rid of bedbugs. A comprehensive approach that includes prevention and non-chemical treatment of infestations is the best way to avoid or eliminate a bedbug problem. While more information can be found on EPA's website, a few examples of non-chemical methods of control include:

- Removing clutter where bedbugs can hide
- Using mattress covers designed to contain bedbugs
- Sealing cracks and crevices
- Vacuuming rugs, and upholstered furniture thoroughly and frequently, as well as vacuuming under beds (take the vacuum bag outside immediately and dispose in a sealed trash bag)
- Washing and drying clothing and bed sheets at high temperatures (heat can kill bedbugs)
- Placing clean clothes in sealable plastic bags when possible
- Being alert and monitoring for bedbugs so they can be treated before a major infestation occurs

This comprehensive method of pest control is called integrated pest management and includes a number of common sense control methods.

If you need to use pesticides, follow these tips to ensure your safety and that the product works:

- Before using any pesticide product, **READ THE LABEL FIRST**, then follow the directions for use
- Check the product label to make sure it is identified for use on bedbugs. If bedbugs are not listed on the label, the pesticide has not been tested for bedbugs and it may not be effective
- Any pesticide product label without an EPA registration number has not been reviewed by EPA to determine how well the product works
- Make sure that the pesticide has been approved for indoor use

EPA is involved in a number of activities to assist in managing the bedbug problem. EPA hosted a bedbug summit in April 2009, and more recently, the agency has been participating in an interagency task force on bedbugs that, among other actions to date, has:

- Issued a joint statement from CDC and EPA to highlight the public health impacts of bedbugs,
- Identified currently registered pesticides that may be effective against bedbugs and is working with the Agricultural Research Service to test the pesticides for efficacy in their labs
- Begun coordinating programs for IPM techniques to address bedbugs
- Facilitated information exchange between the federal agencies to promote efficient, effective use of resources

More information on IPM, bedbugs and how to control them: <http://epa.gov/pesticides/bedbugs>