MCCAA

MALTA COMPETITION AND
CONSUMER AFFAIRS AUTHORITY

MIZZI HOUSE, NATIONAL ROAD,
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GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

NON-PROFESSIONAL USERS OF PESTICIDES 2020

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1. Definitions

'Non-professional user' means any person who uses pesticides in the course of their household and garden activities including the general public, hobby growers and gardeners.

'Professional user' means any person who uses pesticides in the course of their professional activities, including operators, technicians, employers and self-employed people, both in the farming and other sectors.

'Pesticide' means:

(a) Plant protection product (protects crops or desirable or useful plants);

(b) A biocidal product (controls unwanted organisms that are harmful to human or animal health, or that cause damage to human activities).

'Ready-to-Use (RTU) products' in plant protection products means products which can be used by non-professional users and whose formulation consists of a diluted form for which no mixing and dilution of formulation will be necessary prior to its use. In the case of biocidal products, the instructions on the label need to be followed as these might necessitate dilutions of the product.

'Vulnerable groups' means persons needing specific consideration when assessing the acute and chronic health effects of pesticides The groups include pregnant and nursing women, the unborn, infants, children and the elderly.

'Non-chemical methods' means alternative methods to chemical pesticides for plant protection and pest management, based on agronomic techniques or physical, mechanical or biological pest control methods

2. Introduction

The use of pesticides by non-professional users is regulated by the Subsidiary Legislation 430.08 on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulations. The principle is to reduce risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment. Non-professional users making use of pesticides need to be adequately informed on the importance of the good management of these products.

To avoid dangerous handling operations, non-professional users are allowed to use of pesticides of low toxicity, RTU formulations. In plant protection products, the products, are limited to sizes of containers or packaging of a maximum of five (5) litres. Pesticides classified as toxic, very toxic, carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction are not authorised for use by non-professional users. Such information on classification of the product is available on the label through pictograms and hazard and precautionary statements. Any product including such pictograms and hazard and precautionary statements shall not be made available to non-professional users. This restriction eliminates the potential negative effects to those users and the environment.

Given that such users are at times not very familiar with the use of pesticides this may represent a further increase in the risks arising from the improper handling of such products. Thus, this guidance document will target the following issues:

- registered pesticides for non-professional users
- protection for human health,
- safe use: handling, storage and application,
- disposal
- non-chemical methods.

3. List of registered pesticides for non-professional users

The list of pesticides including plant protection products (PPPs) and biocidal products that can be used to reduce insects, weeds and rodents in closed private dwellings by non-professional users can be found on the MCCAA website.

The list of registered plant protection products can be accessed by following the link https://mccaa.org.mt/Section/Content?contentId=1158 A separate sheet of plant protection products which can be used by non-professional users is available online. These products can be sold (placed on the market) by both micro-distributors and other distributors.

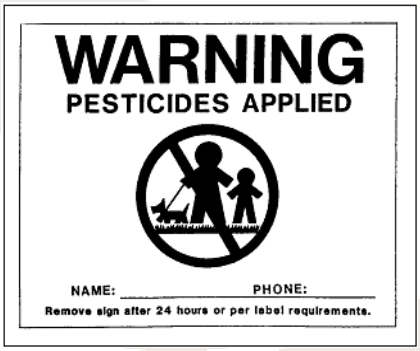
Only the products which are classified as ready-to-use can be utilised by non-professional users, except for plant protection products containing the active substance metaldehyde. The products containing metaldehyde are intended to control snails (molluscicides) and can only be used by professional users (who hold a certificate by MCCAA) in the agricultural industry. The use of metaldehyde-containing products by the general public is prohibited.

The list of registered biocidal products can be accessed by following the link https://mccaa.org.mt/Section/Content?contentId=1131 under the heading 'Database of registered biocidal products'. It is important that only biocidal products which are approved for use by the general public are used by non-professional users.

4. Protection for human health

Pesticides for non-professional users vary substantially in toxicity. The risk for human health depends on the level of toxicity of the active ingredients and co-formulants and on the level of exposure. Vulnerable groups may be more sensitive to the effects of pesticides than the rest of the population.

When applying pesticides to home-grown produce such as fruit and vegetables, it is necessary to leave a period of time before harvesting as indicated by the pesticide label. This is to ensure that the produce is not contaminated and is safe to consume. Additionally, when applying pesticides especially on lawns and front gardens, one should place a clear visible signage up to a minimum of 24 hours after application or according to the product used as indicated on the product label.



Non-professional users exposed to pesticides through the skin and eyes, by breathing or swallowing should take the following measures into account:

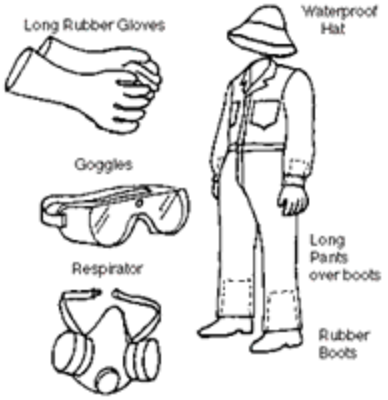
- Stop the application of pesticides and immediately seek medical help,
- Prevent further exposure by removing contaminated clothing,
- Wash contaminated skin or hair with plenty of clean water,
- Flush contaminated eyes with plenty of clean running water, then cover the eye/s with appropriate dressing,
- If a pesticide is swallowed, do not induce vomiting unless the product label recommends otherwise.

5. Safe use: handling, storage and application

5.1 Handling

When handling pesticides non-professional users should observe the following measures:

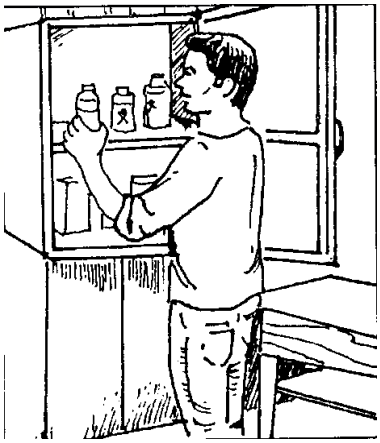
- Always obtain, read and understand the product label and instructions which are supplied with the product carefully.
- Always wear personal protective equipment, such as long sleeve shirt, long pants, gloves, mask and closed-toe shoes in addition to any other protective clothing or equipment when required.
- Remove personal items, such as toys, clothing, or tools from the spray area to avoid contamination.
- Never transfer pesticides to soft drink bottles or other containers. Children or others may mistake them for something to eat or drink.



5.2 Storage

Non-professional users should take in consideration the following measures when storing pesticides:

- Always store pesticides in a lockable, secure area that children and pets do not have access to, preferably in a storage shed away from the house.
- Never store pesticides near any food, animal feed or consumer goods.
- Do not store pesticides in areas exposed to open water.
- Keep pesticides in tightly closed original containers with original labels when storing.



5.3 Application

When applying pesticides non-professional users should follow the following measures (application of pesticides should only be restricted to closed private dwellings):

- Check the label instructions to read the label instructions carefully and check the correct application rate of the pesticide.
- Apply pesticides only to the target area.
- Avoid spreading around granules or pellets as baits for rodents if there is a risk of accidental swallowing by young children or pets. Baits should be placed in a container to avoid intake by children and non-target species.
- When spraying pesticides indoors, make sure the area is well ventilated.
- When applying pesticides as a spray or dust outside, avoid windy conditions and close the doors and windows to your home before application.
- When possible, pesticide application should be carried out during the times when bees and other pollinators are less likely to be actively foraging i.e. during the flowering period, early morning or in the evening.[1]
- The outdoor application of pesticides should not be carried out during rainy or windy days, as this might result in the un-intentional introduction and leaching of such products into the environment, negatively affecting wild flora and fauna species. [2]
- Caution should always be exercised by the public when applying pesticides in the vicinity of, or in close proximity to natural habitats and protected areas. When in doubt, clarification should be sought with the Environment and Resources Authority by contacting info@era.org.mt or calling +356 2292 3500.

[1] For further information on application of pesticides during the times when bees are likely to be actively foraging, is available in the ''Guidance Document for Integrated Pest Management in the Maltese Islands 2015''- Section ''Protection of bees'' available from https://mccaa.org.mt/Section/Content?contentId=1158 .
[2] Further information and guidance on best environmental practice when applying pesticides is available in the "Guidelines on managing non-native plant invaders and restoring native plant communities in terrestrial settings in the Maltese Islands" available from: https://www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=9658.

5.4 Disposal

Pesticides, their containers and any contaminated item such as disposable personal protection equipment should be disposed of in sites which are appropriate for dangerous chemicals as they may pose health and environmental risks. Pesticides containers shall not be reused or refilled.

There are six (6) operational Civic Amenity Sites which are situated at Mriehel, Hal Far, Luqa, Maghtab, Tal-Kus, Ta' Qali and Xewkija, Gozo. These sites are open from Monday to Sunday (including Public Holidays) between 7.30am and 5.30pm. Entrance is free of charge and vehicles may be driven directly into the facility avoiding the need for parking. [3]

[3] Further information can be found on https://www.wasteservmalta.com/en/ca-sites

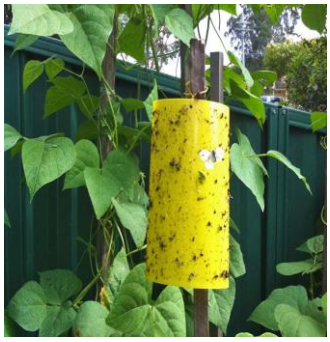
6. Non-chemical methods

Where possible and economically feasible, gardeners and home-owners should give preference to non-chemical measures over chemical treatments. The following non-chemical measures should be used when possible:

6.1 Use of mulching

The use of mulching can eliminate unwanted grasses and weeds from gardens, pathways and driveways. Mulching consists of loose coverings or sheets of material placed on the surface of soil such as shredded leaves, compost, hay, cardboard, gravel and plastic. The use of silver coloured plastic mulching instead of black can reduce the incidence of insects.

6.2 Use of glue-based traps



Glue-based traps can be used in households and gardens to catch insects and pests such as flies, cockroaches, ants, small beetles and other crawling insects and mites. These traps consist of a sticky glue layer mounted on a piece of cardboard or yellow plastic sheet were insects encountering them will adhere to the surface.

6.3 Use of mechanical traps/barriers

Mechanical traps are traditional and effective alternative to the use of rodent pellets. A variety of traps can be employed and they can be an effective measure in eradicating rodents. Unselective clap traps should not be used and care should be taken when placing mechanical

traps if there is access to young children or pets.

Mechanical barriers such as nets and fabric covers can be used to protect plants and crops from molluscs, arthropods and other insects such as flying beetles around the garden.

6.4 Use of bottle traps

Bottle traps can be used to trap flying insects such as fruit flies which are hung onto trees. These traps can be made easily by using empty plastic bottles and placing a liquid bait or attractant inside such as sugar or fishpaste and water. The trap is set by putting a lid on the top and making four holes the size of a pencil at the top of the bottle to allow for the entry of the flies. Another method is to cut the top part of the bottle and place it upside down to form a funnel trap.

6.5 Use of pitfall traps

Pitfall traps are an essential tool for catching ground-dwelling insects, particularly woodlouse and ground beetles. They can be build and set up easily by using recycled materials such as cans and plastic cups. They can be built by digging a small hole in the soil and then placing a can to its rim to the soil surface. Insects can walk over the soil and fall into the pitfall trap. Placing small stones, dry grass or leaves raised a little above the ground can allow the insects to hide and crawl underneath the cover to the trap.

6.6 Restricting pest access

(a) Windows, doors and any other entries such as gaps should be sealed or fly-wired properly to avoid insects and pests from entering into the home.

(b) Also, the use of physical barriers such as copper barriers can be used to keep pests such as snails and slugs away from garden plants.

7. Use of natural products instead of chemicals for control of snails and slugs.

Since the use of molluscicides (products controlling snails and slugs) by non-professional users is not allowed, a few natural ways to control these pests in a garden are identified hereunder:

- The type of plants grown can significantly affect the control of snails and slugs. These prefer seedlings and plants with succulent foliage such as basil, beans, cabbage, lettuce, marigolds, strawberries, and other vegetable plants. It is advisable to, grow plants which are not attractive to snails and slugs such as those with high scents such as lavender, rosemary and sage for areas where there is high pressure of the pests.

- Most ornamental woody plants and ornamental grasses are also not seriously damaged by snails and slugs but these can be a hiding place for them during the day. Nevertheless, landscape is designed using snail- and slug-resistant plants, the damage caused by these pests is most likely low.
- Hand-picking. Hand-picking can be very effective if it is carefully done on a regular basis, ideally daily when beginning. Special attention should be paid to potential hiding places. Once the pest population would has decreased considerably, hand-picking on a weekly basis should be enough.

- Trapping snails and slugs: Baits which contain beer and buried at ground level catches and drowns snails and slugs which fall in them. The fermentation of the beer will attract the pests. Alternatively, a mixture of sugar, water and yeast can be used.

- Barriers. Different type of barriers will keep the snails and slugs out of the selected area. Copper barriers are the most effective since copper reacts with the slime that snails and slugs secrete, causing a disruption in their nervous system similar to an electric shock. If copper foil or tape is used, these will remain effective until they become tarnished. In such case use a vinegar solution to clean the foil or tape.