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**Pesticide Safety**

Our Northeast Kansas climate is well suited for a diversity of plants. Corn, fruit trees, forages, soybeans, grapes, and *lots* of gardens. We’re fortunate to receive decent rainfall and experience temperatures that can allow us a lot of growing success as well.

That same diversity of crops can also be a challenge. All of the aforementioned crops require different pest control programs, and seldom do labels ‘cross’ between horticulture and production agriculture. That means there’s always a risk of offsite damage when a product labeled for one crop is not labeled for another. To reduce the potential for offsite injury, consider taking a few precautionary steps before you decided to use a product.

First, ask yourself if it’s really necessary. Some weeds have to be controlled, whether it be because they result in crop injury or they’re considered noxious (if a noxious weed is present, the landowner is under a legal obligation according to the Kansas Noxious Weed Law to implement control efforts). There are other weeds that might be a nuisance or aren’t even noticed until it’s too late to achieve adequate control measures. As you make application decisions, it’s always a good idea to weigh control versus potential crop injury on your own farm and surrounding areas.

Second, read and follow product labels. The label is the law and is there for a reason. The idea that ‘if a little is good, a lot is better’ isn’t necessarily the best option when it comes to application of a pesticide. Properly calibrated equipment and an understanding of product labels does take time, but it also helps avoid offsite injury as well as resistance to valuable products. If a product label is missing or no longer legible, there are ways to find one. Feel free to drop me a line if you need product label information.

Last but not least – communicate. If you are growing a crop unique to your surroundings or trying out something new, it’s good to communicate with neighboring landowners so everyone understands how products can most safely be used. For specific circumstances, Kansas does have a Sensitive Crops Registry ([https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/pesticide-fertilizer/sensitive-crops-driftwatch](https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/pesticide-fertilizer/sensitive-crops-driftwatch)), but it won’t be applicable for every situation. Communication about planting intentions or established crops is the better safe than sorry option.

Offsite movement of pesticides is never intended, but it is possible. Understanding pesticide characteristics and your surroundings can do a lot to reduce damage and keep products available in to the future.