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### **Proper Pesticide Use**

If you've ever read an article referencing a pesticide in this space, it often includes one of a couple of different phrases. The first is: the label is the law. The second? It's usually something along the lines of 'always read and follow label directions.' Some may see them as a simple disclaimer, but they're more than that. They're a reminder that pesticides do have a label and that label governs their use.

A recent article by KSU Pesticide Safety and Integrated Pest Management Coordinator Frannie Miller outlined multiple important reasons for giving attention to the label anytime a pesticide is applied.

First, labels help insure safety. What do you need for personal protective equipment? How do we minimize pesticide exposure? How do I clean up afterwards? The label outlines these and many other to keep everyone from the applicator to the home/land owner to the innocent bystander safe.

Second, labels are not only designed for safety from the standpoint of direct human exposure, but also for safety surrounding the areas they are applied to and the food or feed products that may be produced. A lot of research goes in to testing formulations that can be used in a manner that is safe for our food system. Off label uses can reduce that safety.

Last but not least, label instructions are designed to ensure product use success while being safe for the environment and economically viable. Misapplication can be a hindrance to all of the above, while causing other issues as well.

Pesticide applications don't have to be scary – that's the reason for the research put in to their use. They do, however, deserve respect. Making sure to understand product labels is a great way to use products safely, and keep them viable for the future.

Rather *not* use a pesticide? Research into alternatives to pesticides is on the increase, with additional options available every day. Most research would suggest increasing variability in the level of control from many non-pesticide options, but there are possibilities for many different situations, and at the very least can provide an integrated management approach to many of our common pest problems. We'll look more in to that in that in future columns.