



Herbicide and Pesticide Use

Position Statement

The Otsego County Conservation Association opposes the wide spread use of pesticides and herbicides due to their harmful effect on the environment and supports limited use under the principles of integrated pest management (IPM) with the goal of moving towards organic methods of control. The improper use of these chemical can result in elevated levels of harmful substances in the environment, having a detrimental effect on human and other animal life, as well plants. Run-off to streams and lakes and infiltration to groundwater can contaminate drinking water supplies.

Pesticides and herbicides are chemicals which prevent, destroy, repel, or mitigate pests. Application techniques are designed to minimize the amount of chemicals used as well as the risk of damage to non-target species. Pesticides and herbicides should always be selectively and carefully used as a last resort, with the strictest adherence to application guidelines. OCCA urges applicators to select pesticides and herbicides that are effective against the target species, unlikely to move offsite through the air or water, non-toxic to people and other organisms, and not persistent in the environment.

OCCA understands that determining the right course of action in pest management is a complex undertaking, as there are many tools and techniques available, all with pros and cons. Deciding whether to use pesticides/herbicides is often a calculated risk which is not to be taken lightly. Knowing when to begin management action is the key to catching an infestation before successful control becomes unfeasible. As with medicine, herbicides must be used judiciously to be safe and effective.

OCCA recognizes that herbicides and pesticides are used by farmers to increase productivity and by other land owners to control weeds and pests. Where this use occurs, OCCA supports the following measures to reduce or eliminate the impact to the environment:

- Employ the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a system that relies on a combination of common sense practices of preventing and controlling pests (e.g., weeds, diseases, insects) in which monitoring is utilized to identify pests, damage thresholds are considered, all possible management options are evaluated, and selected control(s) are implemented. IPM involves a series of steps in the decision-making process, which include:
 - Through regular monitoring and record keeping, identify the pest problem, analyze the conditions causing the problem, and determine the damage threshold level below which the pest can be tolerated.
 - Devise ways to change conditions to prevent or discourage recurrence of the problem. Examples include: utilizing improved plant varieties (e.g., drought resistant, pest resistant), modifying microclimate conditions, or changing cultural practice management programs.
 - If damage thresholds are met, select the combination of control strategies to suppress the pest populations with minimal environmental impact, to avoid surpassing threshold limits. Control measures include biological, cultural, physical, mechanical, and chemical methods. Biological control methods must be environmentally sound and should be properly screened and tested before implementation.
- Non-chemical control measures should focus on practices such as the introduction of natural pest enemies (e.g., parasites and predators), utilizing syringing techniques, improving air movement, soil aeration techniques, and mechanical traps.
- Chemical control strategies should be employed only when other strategies have been determined inadequate. When chemical products are determined necessary, the following practices should be utilized:
 - Always read and follow label directions when using any chemical products.
 - Strive to treat problems at the proper time and under the proper conditions to maximize effectiveness with minimal environmental impact. Spot treatments may provide early effective control of problems before damage thresholds are reached.
 - Store and handle all pest control products in a manner that minimizes human/animal exposure and/or potential for point or non-point source pollution. Employ proper chemical storage practices and use suitable personal protective equipment and handling techniques.
 - Use products and practices that reduce the potential for contamination of ground and surface water. Use of organic products is preferable in all cases.
 - Residential and commercial facilities should inform the public about chemical applications. Common methods include temporary signs or neighbor notification.
 - Dispose of pesticides and herbicides in a responsible way. *These substances should not go out with household garbage.* Annually, on or about the first Saturday after Labor Day, the Otsego County Solid Waste Department and OCCA organize Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

For more information on this program, contact OCCA at (607) 547-4488 or by email at: director@occainfo.org