

Granite State Home and Garden
Immediate Release

Contact: Gail McWilliam Jellie
(603) 271-3788

Please Pass the Salt – Pesticides and Kitchen Tools

by

David J. Rousseau, Director
Division of Pesticide Control
NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food

In the regulatory world of pesticides, “pesticide blunder” stories are often shared among regulators. Sharing this information serves as reminders of what can happen if pesticides are misused or mishandled and hopefully will result in an educational opportunity to avoid such mishaps. Depending on the reader’s personality, some of the stories of pesticide mishap can invoke outright laughter while certain mishaps may bring an emotion of sadness. One of the head-scratching tales told this year is of a gentleman who used a saltshaker as a pesticide application tool. Somehow, a memory lapse allowed him to put the shaker back into active service at the dinner table. It didn’t take him long to put two and two together, that is, his sudden illness with the altered contents of the shaker. Fortunately, after a little bit of medical treatment, and a clear re-assignment of the shaker, the gentleman survived with what appears to be a minor health mishap.

Selecting a food dispensing apparatus or using kitchen measuring and mixing tools for pesticide use is downright risky practice. In the saltshaker situation, disposing of the dispenser after use as a pesticide applicator may have been a safer choice, although if future use is planned and legitimate, labeling it as “pesticide shaker” or whatever identifies it as the pesticide application tool, formerly known as saltshaker, may be wise. The lesson here is proper tool selection and safe management after use. It may be beneficial to think about what tools, such as measuring, mixing, and application should be obtained for use with the pesticide when you make the pesticide purchase. Another point to consider in regard to the use of household items as pesticide tools is what the label may identify as proper. The pesticide label is the law on how to use the pesticide, which may or may not include such specific instructions. It may identify that the pesticide can only be dispensed from or stored in its original container.

So, what can we do to avoid these types of mishaps? One of the best pieces of advice in regard to purchasing a pesticide is to make an attempt to fully understand, before the purchase, how you’ll manage it from start to finish, including measuring, mixing, storage and disposal. Reading the full label, again BEFORE making the purchase is also extremely wise. When reading the label keep in mind how you intend to use, store and dispose it. Many household pesticides are sold as “RTU” or “ready to use” containers that do not require the preparation of a mixture. This is helpful for those of with limited facilities for properly cleaning containers and tools or those of us mathematically challenged when it comes to preparing a mixture. Finally, remember to always keep pesticides out of the reach of children and, before shaking, always consider what might be in the saltshaker.

For more information about pesticide safety, contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control, NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food, PO Box 2042, Concord, NH 03302-2042, (603) 271-3550 or pesticides@agr.state.nh.us, www.agriculture.nh.gov.

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