

Healthy Pets



Responsible Pesticide usage

There have been many incidents where pet owners have lost their pets due to the use of pesticides in their homes. This alarming issue has emphasised the need for responsible pesticide use amongst home and pet owners.



Dogs and cats come into direct contact with pesticides more frequently than humans, whether it be while rolling around in the grass, relaxing in the shade or playing around with their favourite toy.

Many consumers today are not aware of the implications and health risks that the incorrect use of pesticides has on their pets and others, let alone it being illegal. There are many dangers involved when pesticides are misused and as the regulatory body for pest control industry, the South African Pest Control Association (SAPCA) senses the urge to educate consumers about responsible pesticide usage.

When applying pesticides yourself always read the label on the pesticide that you intend using and ensure that it is registered for the particular application and spectrum of control required. Follow the safety precautions indicated on the label, including the use of personal safety equipment such as gloves and a face mask. Ensure you also follow precautions such as not eating, drinking or smoking whilst applying pesticide. Hands should always be washed with soap after application. Give special attention to withdrawal periods especially related to edible garden crops – the withdrawal period is the time that you need to wait before you eat the fruit, vegetables or herbs.

Professional Pest Control

If you are in doubt about the correct use of a pesticide, contact a pest management professional registered with the Department of Agriculture for the sake of your own and your family's safety.

SAPCA invites consumers to visit their website to locate pest management professionals close to them. "This is a valuable referral service as by using a SAPCA member you will receive quality work, good service and ensure that your family and the environment is taken care of, whilst your pest problem is effectively resolved," says Mark Enslin, President of SAPCA.

According to Act No. 36 of 1947, pesticides may only be applied for purposes as indicated on their labels by registered Pest Control Officers (PCOs). PCOs that are not registered often apply pesticides contrary to the label instructions and therefore contravene the Act. The Registrar has the power to prosecute operators that make themselves guilty of these contraventions; however prevention is better than cure and for this reason it is best to use a registered pest control officer when using a company to assist in pest management around your house. SA is plagued by unregistered PCOs that defraud the public with unprofessional and potentially harmful services that often lead to human health impacts and environmental impacts. SAPCA members adhere to a strict code of conduct, which forces the member to act lawfully in the application of pesticides.

SAPCA has recently introduced a lapel-type ID card that identifies the individual as a SAPCA member to make it easier and safer for the consumer. Ask questions regarding the treatment and precautions before, during, and after treatment. If the individual is not knowledgeable and cannot supply satisfactory answers, chances are they will not be able to deliver on the service promises either. Don't be misled by extended guarantees and warranties, as these could be indicators that illegal pesticide 'cocktails' or some other environmentally hazardous substance will be used. A reasonable service guarantee is based on the type of service, the pest being treated and the remedy being applied.

Dr Gerhard Verdoorn of the Griffon Poisoning Centre believes that people don't realise that technically, any chemical can be dangerous to human and animal health if not used as directed. It is often not the chemicals that harm humans or the environment but the incorrect use thereof.

Taking the necessary precautions, using a registered pest control officer and the correct application of pesticides could save you countless tears and thousands of rands at the vet's surgery.

Pet owners – some tips to prevent your pet being contaminated with pesticides

- Rentokil recommends that the insecticides and rodenticides used must be environmentally acceptable and registered for use in South Africa. The registration must be indicated by an 'L' number, which will refer to the relevant pest for which the pesticide is designed.
- Check all products for child safety. If they're not safe for kids, they're not safe for dogs and cats.
- Wash your pet's feet after walking on any suspect area, or at least wipe paws with a damp cloth.
- Read the small print and follow instructions carefully.
- Keep pesticides in their original containers which should be clearly marked and tightly sealed.
- Never, ever pour pesticides or household chemicals down the drain.
- Always read pesticide labels for specific instructions as to how long to keep the animals out of the house or treated area.
- Place baits in areas where pets can't reach them.
- Don't allow pets in sprayed areas until the pesticide has dried completely.
- Use care when applying pesticides directly to pets. Follow the label carefully, and be sure to use the correct amount of product for the animal being treated.
- Products labelled for use on dogs only should never be used on cats or other animals.
- Products designed for adult cats or dogs should never be used on kittens or puppies unless the label states that the product may be used on younger animals.
- Become informed – the more you know, the safer your home and environment will be.