

# Pesticides and You

News from the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)

*One in a Series of NCAMP "How-To's"*

## Evaluating An IPM Program

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a decision-making process to provide economical, long-term solutions to pest problems while minimizing hazards to health and the environment. It is an alternative to conventional pest control operations that rely solely on toxic pesticides. However, because IPM is often defined differently by different interests, the details of each pest management program must be understood and carefully evaluated before it can be considered legitimate.

Any responsible IPM program must contain the following elements:

- **Identification of the pest(s)**- The identity of each pest must be recorded on a standardized data sheet. All unidentified pests should be collected for

later identification.

- **Careful monitoring of pest populations through time**- Data collected at each visit should include numbers of pests, natural enemies, and other relevant information such as weather, human activities, etc. Data should be clearly recorded on standardized forms and made publicly available.

- **Knowledge or determination of injury and action levels**- The injury level is the number of pests necessary to cause damage (e.g. yield reduction, aesthetic injury). The action level is the pest population at which a control is needed.

- **Awareness of and willingness to use all available control tactics**- Possible control tactics include sanitation,

structural modifications, mechanical and biological controls, and the use of low toxicity chemicals such as B.t., boric acid, diatomaceous earth, and soaps and horticultural oils. Conventional pesticides, if permitted, should be used only if all other tactics have been considered.

- **Clearly-defined system for choosing among the tactics**- The availability of alternatives does no good if they are not used. The decision-making process must be spelled out in detail to ensure that adequate pest control is achieved by using the least-toxic and most permanent control actions possible.

- **Evaluation of the program's effectiveness**- Since pest management should be a long-term approach to a pest problem, this element is necessary to ensure that the program is working and to facilitate future improvements.