

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives

Vol. 4 No. 1 January/February 2004



Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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Fewer Pesticides and Fewer Pests at School

New Report Examines Pesticide Use and Child Safety in Public Schools

While most public schools still use toxic chemicals to treat problem pests, some schools are leading the way for children's environmental health with effective, least-toxic pest control programs. *Clean Schools, Safe Kids*, a new report released by the Agricultural Resources Center & Pesticide Education Project, details the benefits to schools, student health, and environmental quality that can be achieved using least-hazardous pest control programs that minimize the use of hazardous pesticides.

The report also examines some of the toxic pest control practices that are still common in North Carolina's schools, for example:

- 43% of responding school districts report using pesticides regularly in classrooms.
- 17% of responding school districts fog buildings with pesticides.
- Only 3 responding school districts notify parents when pesticides are used at school.

School districts that use least-hazardous programs, such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), report more effective programs and lower average costs. Steve Cutright, who oversees an IPM program at Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, reports that IPM is much more effective in his schools than conventional pest control had been. "The important thing is that IPM works better," he stated. "In that sense, it is definitely more cost-effective, because the old way, when schools were just sprayed every month, was never very effective in the first place."

Large, urban districts as well as small, rural districts in North Carolina report success with IPM programs. *Clean Schools, Safe Kids* includes success stories, cost com-

parisons, and resources for school staff, parents, and others interested in improving school environmental health by reducing pesticide dependence.

"Children spend 30-50% of their waking hours in school nine months of the year. Schools should be physically safe and free from health hazards including unnecessary exposures to toxic chemicals like pesticides. IPM is the approach to pest control which is most effective and least likely to involve using chemical pesticides," says Dr. Katherine Shea, an expert in children's environmental health and member of ARC's Board of Directors. "School districts are finding that with a least-toxic pest control program, they can cut pesticide dependence, achieve better pest control, and improve environmental quality and safety."

Successful school IPM trends were recognized nationally in the April 2003 report *Safer Schools: Achieving a Healthy Learning Environment Through Integrated Pest Manage-*

ment, which documented actual strategies schools use to decrease pesticide use while implementing more effective pest management strategies. "Understanding how these programs take shape and the approaches used by schools and districts, as well as hurdles they had to overcome, is key to the broader adoption of successful programs across the nation," says Kagan Owens, a co-author of *Safer Schools* and program director for Beyond Pesticides. She states that the report "exemplifies the fact that school districts nationwide should be required to adopt an IPM policy and program in order to make sure that all students and school staff are protected from the unnecessary use of hazardous chemicals."

For a copy of *Clean Schools, Safe Kids*, contact ARC / PESTed at (919) 833-1123 or visit www.ibiblio.org/arc/. *Safer Schools* is available from Beyond Pesticides at (202)543-5450, or visit the Beyond Pesticides website at www.beyondpesticides.org.

Case Study: IPM at Wake School System, NC

In 1993, North Carolina's Wake County school system underwent a dramatic change at the hands of its pest control technicians. Buddy McCarty and his staff at Wake County School created a healthier learning environment by altering the school's pest management program and employing integrated pest management. Previously, 38,400 gallons of regular-strength pesticide product were used on the school grounds each year, in addition to 500 gallons of pesticide foggers and 200 pounds of pesticide dust. Concerned about the link between pesticides and cancer and other adverse health effects, McCarty and his staff began to emphasize non-chemical control including caulking cracks, sealing holes, installing screens and door sweeps, and thorough sanitation, especially in cafeterias and kitchens. These days, by adopting IPM, pesticides were cut to just five gallons and no foggers or dust at all.

"By changing simple practices, you can have a great effect," said Mike Burriss, assistant superintendent of facilities for Wake County schools, "It's a very simple process, and it works very well. It actually lowers my costs, because I don't have to provide pesticides and training on how to use them."

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Happy Holidays from Beyond Pesticides!

What To Do When Spiders Come To School

Most spiders pose no threat to humans. Even the most dangerous spiders in the U.S. are not aggressive and can only be provoked to bite under certain circumstances. Spiders are actually beneficial biological control agents, preying upon a vast number of insect pests. The most common poisonous spiders in the U.S. are tarantulas, black widows, and brown recluse or violin spiders. Management of poisonous spiders generally corresponds to the same methods as your regular spider that creeps through school hallways. *For more information on identifying poisonous spiders, contact Beyond Pesticides.*

PREVENTION

Structural

- Install door sweeps.
- Seal electrical openings.
- Screen vents and seal around them.
- Seal up access points on the outside of buildings.
- Repair or tighten screens in doors and windows.
- Power wash the outside of buildings to remove debris.

Cultural

- Vacuum the floor, baseboards and corners regularly.
- Remove vegetation from around the building, leaving 24" band.
- Move firewood, stacked lumber, stone, and other clutter from around the buildings' foundations.
- Remove, reduce or shield outside lighting. Use shielded lights, lower wattage bulbs, or sodium vapor or yellow lights.
- Indoors, use shades or curtains at night so that insects and spiders are not drawn to windows.
- Dry out and vent any moist areas, which may attract spiders.
- Remove clutter in storage rooms; keep boxes away from walls.
- Keep clothing off of the floor and hang shoes or place them in sealed plastic bags. (Most spider bites are received when putting on shoes or clothing that has lain on the floor.)
- Shake out any clothing thoroughly that has been at ground level overnight.

- Thoroughly check and shake clean blankets or other bedding that have been undisturbed for long periods.

Biological

- Eliminate insect populations attracting spiders with appropriate beneficials, such as nematodes.

INSPECTION

- Look for spiders crawling about or webs in corners, eaves, or outdoors in shrubs. An increase in insect pests may lead to an increase in spider populations and indicate a need for closer surveillance. Use glue board monitoring traps to follow spider activity and find problem spots.
- Monitor for black widows at night with a head lamp or flash light, checking in cracks and crevices around the foundations of buildings, on the undersides of outdoor wooden furniture, between stones and flowerpots, and around the edges of woodpiles or other materials stored outdoors.
- Brown recluse spiders are most often found in boxes, around piles of paper and debris, in bedroom closets, under furniture, around woodpiles, sheds, and similar areas outdoors where debris may pile up.

CONTROL

- Vacuum to remove webs and egg cases.
- Invert a wide-mouthed jar over the spider and slide a piece of stiff paper or cardboard under the jar while keeping the jar pressed against the surface on which the spider is standing. Keeping the paper pressed against the mouth of the jar, turn the jar over and tap the paper so the spider falls in the jar. Carry the jar outside and shake the spider out.
- Freeze boxes of papers suspected of harboring brown recluse spiders for 48 hours to kill the spiders before unpacking the boxes.
- Gently sweep up the spider (especially tarantulas), place them in a grocery bag and release outside.

Olkowski, Helga, Daar, Shiela, and Olkowski, William, Common-Sense Pest Control, Newtown: The Taunton Press, Inc., 1991.
Pinto & Associates. 1998. "Spider Pest Management." Techletter. 14(9):1-2. Pinto & Associates, Mechanicsville, MD.