

Hazardous Substances – **General**

08.01.14

Farm chemical disposal >

Under present *Workplace Health and Safety Act, Dangerous Goods and Environmental Protection Legislation*, users of farm chemicals have a responsibility to dispose of unwanted chemicals in a safe manner that does not have an adverse effect on other persons or the environment. This information bulletin provides general information on the handling and disposal of unwanted farm chemicals and their containers.

Minimising use

When deciding on the need for farm chemicals, farmers should use the principles of the hierarchy of control and consider eliminating or reducing the use of chemicals.

Minimisation of use is an important part of restricting the potential environmental health effects of farm chemicals. Before buying and using chemicals consider the following:

- Consider controlling pest, weed or insect problems by alternative non chemical methods;
- Choose the least residual product available for the application;
- Purchase chemicals in reusable or returnable containers if possible, otherwise, try to obtain recyclable containers;
- Co-operate with other farmers to minimise the amount purchased;
- Minimise the number of articles (such as measuring containers, funnels and stirrers) used in preparation and application;
- Add rinsates (washout solutions) to the tank of chemical to be used.

Avoid creating waste

When using chemicals a few simple considerations may avoid creating waste:

- Do not buy more than you need;
- Do not mix more than you need for immediate use;
- Take care to avoid spillage during mixing, handling and storage; and
- Where possible, use the full contents of the container, triple rinse the container and dispose of correctly.

putting safety first >



Protect yourself

Whether using or disposing of farm chemicals, always follow safe procedures and wear appropriate protective clothing. Labels and information sheets will indicate the correct procedures and protective clothing to be used. Labels may also give information on health and environmental effects and disposal of containers.

Important: Stop and read the label and heed the warnings before using any chemical

Surplus chemicals

When disposing of surplus chemicals, the options in descending order of preference are:

- 1) Return unopened containers to the supplier or manufacturer;
- 2) Use the chemical for its intended purposes;
- 3) If the container is sound and the label intact, offer the surplus chemical to another farm operator who needs it for an approved use. Providing that farmer has the appropriate permit and training to purchase and use the chemical, eg. S7 poisons;
- 4) Arrange for collection by an approved waste disposal contractor (listed in Yellow Pages under "Waste Disposal and Reduction Services");

In the meantime, all chemicals should be labeled and stored in a secured and safe place.

Burial of waste on owner's property

If other disposal options are not available or practicable, and if burial will not result in human or environmental risk, then note the following points when disposing of a chemical on a property:

- The label advice on disposal must be followed;
- Only chemicals that biodegrade or decompose in water (hydrolyse) can be disposed of by burial;
- Waste water should be first diluted and then disposed of in a pit drain at least 1 metre below the surface, well away from the water courses, borefields, ground water discharge area, recharge areas for drinking or stock water, areas of high water table or high permeable soils. Coverage should be at least 500mm of soil;
- The pit drain should be sufficient length to accommodate the waste water;
- The pit drain should be back filled and a different site chosen for future waste water disposal.

Disposal site

The disposal site should be:

- Sited to avoid seepage and run off which may contaminate other areas and be remote, flood free, clearly marked and fenced;
- In an area where there is no danger of contaminating dwellings, underground water, surface water, crops or livestock;
- Level, with suitable plastic liner and have hydrated lime spread across the bottom; and
- Suitably identified for future owner or user of the property.

Disposal of empty containers

- Empty drums must be rinsed and disposed of, or recycled in the manner suggested on the label. If manually rinsed, they must be triple rinsed. Disposal of drums is less of an environmental issue if they are rinsed correctly.
- Containers should be returned to the supplier when they are marked returnable, or the label specifies return to point of sale. Where rinsed containers are stored ensure that lids or bungs are removed to prevent re-use and that containers are secure. If not returned to supplier it is appropriate to puncture or crush the container to ensure that it cannot be used again.
- For advice on rinsing drums refer to “Avcare Standard for Effective Rinsing of Farm Chemical Containers” or get advice from drumMUSTER at <http://www.drummuster.com.au> or telephone drumMUST on (02) 6230 6712.
- Decisions on whether a landfill will accept a properly cleaned chemical container rests with the landfill operator. Holders of such empty containers should discuss their disposal with the local government authority.

Important do's and don'ts for use and disposal of chemicals and containers:

DO	read the label and follow the instructions;	DON'T	eat, drink or smoke during disposal work;
DO	ask for advice from suppliers or authorities when you need it;	DON'T	mix chemicals together before disposal;
DO	get a Material Data Sheet from the supplier;	DON'T	allow waste to discharge into drains or watercourses or to contaminate ground water;
DO	wear recommended protective clothing;	DON'T	re-use containers or convert drums into feed troughs or water containers for livestock;
DO	dispose of wastes as and when they arise;	DON'T	accumulate used containers;
DO	comply with local authorities requirements for the disposal of farm chemicals;	DON'T	use food or drink containers to store chemicals.

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