

SUMMER AG SAFETY SERIES

CHEMICAL SAFETY



Chemicals and pesticides can be an important tool for productive farming, but when you use them incorrectly, you could endanger yourself and any others who visit your farm.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates there are more than 10,000 poisonings each year — a quarter of which take place on the job. **Some of the most common chemicals and pesticides used on the farm include:**

- **Insecticides** – to kill insects.
- **Fertilizers** – to enhance plant growth.
- **Herbicides** – to stop plant growth.
- **Fungicides** – to kill fungus.
- **Fuels** – to provide heat or energy.
- **Lubricants** – to grease parts.
- **Solvents** – to dissolve substances.

You or your visitors could be exposed to one of the above chemicals by:

- Swallowing them.
- Inhaling them into your lungs.
- Absorbing them through your skin.
- Splashing liquid chemicals into your eyes.
- Injecting them into your body through cuts or needles.

Here's how you can lower the risk of being poisoned by chemicals on your farm:

- 1. Read the label before using any chemical or pesticide.** The label includes a listing of what personal protective equipment is required with that particular substance. It also tells you the toxicity of that chemical, how to use it, and how to dispose of it.
- 2. Lock your chemicals up when they are not in use.** You never know when a child, a curious adult or even an animal will find their way to a dangerous substance.
- 3. Wash your hands after using chemicals.** Even if you were wearing protective gloves, there's still a chance that particles from the chemical or pesticide made its way to your skin. When you wash your hands, you ensure that you won't spread the chemical around your house or anywhere else you may visit.
- 4. Educate yourself about how to properly use chemicals.** Make sure you read any instructional materials that accompany the chemicals, so you know how to properly store and use them.

If you or someone else on your farm is exposed to a chemical or pesticide, you may experience the following symptoms:

- Headaches
- Fever/sweating
- Dilated eyes
- Nausea
- Difficulty breathing
- Burns

If these symptoms occur but are not severe, call your doctor's office. **However, if they are severe, you should call 911 or visit the emergency room right away.** Take the label (or a picture of it) along with you so your caregivers know what has poisoned you.