

Living in a farming environment - Understanding pesticide spray drift



Pesticides are among the many tools used by farmers. They are commonly used in agriculture to protect crops against destructive insects, diseases and weeds. If a neighbour is applying pesticides to a field or an orchard, and you suspect that the products may be drifting onto your property or on yourself, a family member or a pet, **this fact sheet is intended to help you assess the situation.**

What is spray drift?

Spray drift occurs when pesticide particles remain suspended in the air long enough to be carried by the wind away from the intended target area. The occurrence of spray drift depends on a number of factors, such as weather conditions and the type of equipment used to apply the pesticide.

Things to know:

- Spray drift is not necessarily a sign that pesticides are being applied in a manner that does not comply with the conditions indicated on the label.
- Vapours from a pesticide application generally dissipate within a few hours under normal environmental conditions.
- Some pesticides have a strong odour that can be unpleasant, but this odour does not necessarily mean there is problematic level of drift.

How is spray drift minimized?

Health Canada imposes restrictions on how pesticides must be used, and includes specific instructions on pesticide labels to reduce the risks from spray drift.

For example, the label may require the following:

- Drift reduction equipment like shrouds or special nozzles
- Untreated buffer zone for downwind sensitive habitats
- Restrictions on time of day or weather conditions during application

Worried about pesticide spray drift?

Here are some examples of circumstances that may be cause of concern during or after a pesticide application:

- Particles or droplets of pesticide come into contact with you, a family member or a pet
- You, a family member or a pet experience adverse health effects
- Pesticide comes into contact with food in the garden
- You notice contamination of a body of water

What can you do?

Safety steps: If someone is spraying pesticides near your home and you are concerned, you can take safety steps like:

- Closing windows
- Removing or covering outdoor toys and eating areas
- Keeping kids and pets indoors
- Avoiding being close to the area being sprayed

Health: You should consult a healthcare professional or call your local poison control centre in case of any health concerns related to potential exposure to pesticides.

Incident: Report incidents related to spray drift to your provincial or territorial pesticide regulatory agency.

General questions: If you have any questions about health or environmental concerns related to pesticides, contact Health Canada's [Pest Management Information Service](#).

Complaint: If you think spray drift is the result of misuse (use contrary to the label instructions), contact Health Canada's Pesticide Compliance Program at pcp-pcp@hc-sc.gc.ca

Role of Health Canada's Pesticide Compliance Program (PCP)

The PCP is responsible for enforcing the *Pest Control Products Act* (PCPA). When you report a spray drift of concern, inspectors will verify whether the user has followed the label instructions. If violations of the PCPA are established, enforcement action will be taken.

The *Privacy Act* limits the amount of information that can be shared about a party subject to an inspection. Inspectors will generally not follow up with you after collecting your information. Also, the PCPA does not cover assessments of damages or compensation related to spray drift. As such, inspectors cannot provide any information or take any action regarding compensation or damage claims.

For more information

Fact sheet [Management of pesticide spray drift: An applicator's summary guide](#)

Health Canada's Pesticide Compliance Program (PCP) is responsible for enforcing the *Pest Control Products Act*. Visit canada.ca/pesticide-compliance