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Pesticide Labels

Tis the season for fighting weeds...and bugs...and diseases...in everything from field and forage crops to gardens and landscapes. We may try to combat them with our management practices (timely fertilization, harvest management, varied planting dates, etc...), or cultural practices like mulching or encouraging beneficial insects – but even that sometimes doesn't work exactly as planned. At that point, you might be considering a pesticide to help out a bit – and that's where an understanding of product labels is important.

The product label tells you much of what you need to know about just about any product available. It starts with knowing the product's active ingredient. We often refer to products by their brand name, but that can be misleading. Instead, check out the product's active ingredient listing. Some products may have two or three. Knowing those active ingredients can help you determine if it's really the right product – or not.

Next, explore application rate recommendations. Most products have different application rates based upon the pest we're after and the crop it's being used in. These rates are designed to achieve control of the pest for which we are applying while at the same time being safe for the plant to which we are applying. Part of those application recommendations will also likely include information on any additives that may be recommended – or prohibited. Failure to follow these instructions can result in unintended damage – or a lack of control.

Be sure to follow any application safety guidelines as well. Some products require specialized clothing. Many products have what's known as a pre-harvest interval – the time we need to wait after application before harvest/consumption can occur. Some will even include a pre-entry interval, and cautions against entering field areas after application until a specified time. All are designed to keep the applicator safe.

Products are required to carry a label for a reason – and failure to follow these directions could result in everything from poor control to a lost crop to harm to the applicator or those nearby. Products have been tested to make sure they work and approved by regulatory agencies to make sure they are safe – but the label is still the law. Be sure before you make any applications to understand how to make that product work the best it can, while being safe for you and your environment.

Looking to dig in to labels a little deeper? Manufacturer websites are a great source of information. Two additional websites: www.cdms.net and www.greenbook.net area also great resources and may help you search through labels a little deeper. Check them out if you are trying to find additional information.