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An Overview of Australia's
National System for Managing

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

System Development and Leadership

Nationally by PIMC through PSIC, and internationally by the Australian Government



Registration of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals

Nationally by APVMA

SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The role of governments in the agricultural and veterinary chemical management system is to develop, manage, evaluate and continually improve the system. This is led at the national level by the **Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC)**, consisting of the agriculture ministers from the Australian Government, the states and territories and New Zealand.

PIMC seeks advice on agricultural and veterinary chemical issues from a committee of experts, the **Product Safety and Integrity Committee (PSIC)**. This committee includes high level representatives from Australian and state/territory government primary industry or agriculture departments, CSIRO and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). It also involves representatives of other ministerial councils which have an interest in managing agricultural and veterinary chemicals:

- the Workplace Relations Ministers Council
- the Australian Health Ministers Council and
- the Environment Protection and Heritage Council.

PSIC also works with non-government organisations representing the agricultural and veterinary chemical industry, agricultural industries, professional and research institutions and community health, consumer and environmental interests at the national level.

REGISTRATION OF AGRICULTURAL AND VETERINARY CHEMICALS

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) administers the National Registration Scheme for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals. The Scheme registers and regulates the manufacture and supply of all pesticides and veterinary medicines used in Australia, up to the point of wholesale sale.

Before being registered for sale, products must go through a risk assessment process. Companies must provide the APVMA with information about the product to allow independent evaluators to decide whether it is effective and safe for people, animals and the environment, and not a trade risk.

Other Australian Government agencies also help the APVMA evaluate agricultural and veterinary chemical products:

- **The Office of Chemical Safety** (Department of Health and Ageing) advises on toxicological issues and worker safety.
- **The Department of the Environment and Heritage** advises on whether products might harm the environment, and how to avoid this.
- **State/Territory primary industry or agriculture departments, environment protection authorities and independent reviewers** advise on how well the chemicals control pests and diseases.

The APVMA notifies the public of the results of the evaluation and invites public comment on the registration proposal before making its decision. It also invites members of the public to participate in its programs such as reporting adverse chemical experiences through the Adverse Experience Reporting Program (AERP) and contributing to chemical reviews.

The APVMA sets maximum residue limits (MRLs). An MRL is the highest concentration of an agricultural and veterinary chemical residue permitted in food or animal feed. MRLs are used to check whether chemical users are following the directions on the label. MRLs are normally set well below the level that would harm health. When an MRL is exceeded, it usually indicates a chemical is being misused, rather than a public health or safety concern.

The APVMA and **Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)** work together to ensure that the use of chemical products and the level of any residues in food are safe. When a new MRL is set by the APVMA, it notifies FSANZ so that it can be considered for listing in the Food Standards Code. When incorporated into the Food Standards Code, the MRL is the highest concentration of a chemical residue that is legally permitted in a food.

The APVMA reviews products that have been on the market for many years to ensure they meet the latest standards. Its national compliance program also ensures chemical products continue to meet their registration conditions.

For further information visit the following websites:

- APVMA at www.apvma.gov.au
- FSANZ at www.foodstandards.gov.au



Control of Use

Jurisdictionally by State and Territory Governments

Industry Risk Management Programs (Manufacturers & Distributors)

Nationally by agricultural and veterinary chemical industry organisations

CONTROL OF USE

State and territory governments regulate the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals after they have been sold. The regulations cover:

- basic training requirements for users
- licensing of commercial pest control operators and ground and aerial spray operators
- residue monitoring
- arrangements to enforce the safe use of chemicals, including the use of codes of practice, spraydrift guidelines and other user awareness raising initiatives.

State and territory regulations use a national model to regulate dangerous substances in the workplace.

State and territory government primary industry/agriculture, health and environment agencies also advise on agricultural and veterinary chemical use and promote other means of controlling pests and diseases. They undertake research, training and education to manage possible risks from agricultural and veterinary chemical use and to improve the way they are used.

For further information visit the following websites

- NSW Department of Primary Industries at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au
- Victorian Department of Primary Industries at www.dpi.vic.gov.au
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries at www.dpi.qld.gov.au
- Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment at www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au
- Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia at www.pirsa.sa.gov.au
- Western Australian Department of Health at www.health.wa.gov.au
- Northern Territory Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development at www.primaryindustry.nt.gov.au

INDUSTRY RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

(Manufacturers and Distributors)

Avcare (the National Association for Crop Production and Animal Health) is the largest national organisation representing the agricultural and veterinary chemical industry. It includes manufacturers, formulators, chemical distributors and companies involved in agricultural biotechnology.

VMDA (the Veterinary Manufacturers and Distributors Association), represents the interests of the Australian animal health industry, including manufacturers, importers and distributors of veterinary medicines and animal health products.

Avcare and VMDA work with the APVMA and government to ensure a fair, science-based registration system for agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

Agsafe is an independent subsidiary of Avcare. Its role is to help the industry to safely store, handle and transport chemicals through accredited training and safety programs. The program also provides national training and accreditation programs to those selling or offering advice on agricultural and veterinary chemicals, to ensure agricultural and veterinary chemical users get responsible advice. Agsafe uses commercial sanctions authorised by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to ensure the industry meets its obligations.

VMDA runs a veterinary industry focussed training program which is Agsafe accredited.

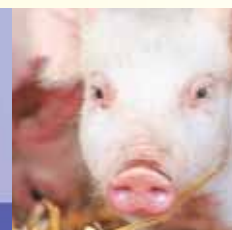
State and territory governments recognise the Agsafe program in relation to licensing requirements and by granting exemptions to Agsafe-accredited premises.

Agsafe also manages **drumMUSTER**, a national program for collecting and recycling empty, cleaned, non-returnable chemical containers. The program aims to have fewer containers ending up as landfill by providing farmers with a safe way of safely disposing of them, and a cleaner environment.

ChemClear® is a new industry-funded program which aims to provide all chemical users with a safe and easy collection and disposal service.

For further information visit the following websites:

- Avcare at www.avcare.org.au
- drumMUSTER at www.drummuster.com.au
- Chemclear® at www.chemclear.com.au
- VMDA at www.vmda.com.au



Industry Risk Management Programs (Users)

Nationally/industry sector by primary industry organisations



System Improvement

Lead by Government (PIMC through PSIC)



Agricultural and Veterinary Chemical Management System

INDUSTRY RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

(Users)

Some agricultural and veterinary chemical training providers run training and accreditation programs to ensure safe and effective chemical use.

The National Farmers' Federation and the Rural Training Council of Australia set up **ChemCert Australia** as a national industry training and accreditation program, based on recognised national industry competencies. ChemCert trains farm chemical users to meet all regulations and laws requiring the safe use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals, as well as their obligations under industry quality assurance programs.

The Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety and *Farmsafe Australia's* **Managing Farm Safety** training course trains farm managers and owners to meet national industry competency standards for occupational health and safety. Its aim is to manage injury and illness risks associated with farm life and work, including agricultural and veterinary chemical use.

Other quality assurance programs and codes of practice for primary industries and regions include managing the risks of agricultural and veterinary chemical use on-farm. More farmers are adopting these programs to ensure they meet their food safety and wider community obligations. Major retailers and fresh produce handlers also have supplier quality-assurance programs to ensure food safety and quality.

For further information visit the following websites:

- National Farmers' Federation at www.nff.org.au
- ChemCert at www.Chemcert.org.au
- Farmsafe at www.farmsafe.org.au

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

A critical part of the system is assessing how well it is meeting its objective, so improvements can be made, if necessary.

National operating principles are being developed to monitor and report on the system's performance and to identify areas for improvement. The principles describe what the system wants to achieve. This includes:

- an effective registration process and system for managing risks associated with agricultural and veterinary chemical sales, handling, use and disposal
- consistent regulatory approaches and compliance costs for primary producers across Australia
- fair arrangements for meeting the costs of managing risks
- a way to evaluate and communicate how well the system is working to give everyone involved, confidence.

In partnership with participating industries, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry conducts the **National Residue Survey (NRS)**, which monitors chemical residues in raw food and fibre commodities. Participating industries—meat, grains, honey, fruit, vegetables, nuts, seafood, and wool—pay for the NRS.

The NRS also surveys heavy metals and organochlorines, such as DDT, that could still be present in the environment as a result of past industry use.

The APVMA runs **Adverse Experience Reporting Programs** to report on unintended or unexpected effects of agricultural and veterinary chemicals on animals, people or the environment. The APVMA analyses the reports to develop better practices for using chemicals, prevent avoidable side effects and to continually improve manufacturing practices. Anyone can participate in these reporting programs.

FSANZ conducts the **Australian Total Dietary Survey**, which screens food prepared to table-ready state. The survey estimates the dietary intake of a range of pesticides and contaminants, based on food consumption data from national dietary surveys. This provides the most accurate estimates available of our exposure to agricultural and veterinary chemicals through our food.

Residue-testing programs undertaken by the states/ territories and by agricultural commodity organisations identify and help correct failings in agricultural practice, the quality of chemical products and MRL problems. Some marketing organisations also conduct their own residue surveys as part of their quality assurance arrangements.

Stakeholders groups can provide feedback on the performance of the agricultural and veterinary chemical management system through APVMA stakeholder consultative committee, chemical registration and review processes and through their participation in PSIC policy development processes.

For further information visit the following websites:

- APVMA at www.apvma.gov.au
- FSANZ at www.foodstandards.gov.au



What are agricultural and veterinary chemicals and why are they used?

Chemicals are used in industrial processes, agriculture, veterinary and pharmaceutical medicines and in food as food additives. They may also be present in food as contaminants.

Agricultural and veterinary chemicals are used to protect crops, livestock and other animals and plants from pests and diseases. They include pesticides, such as insecticides, fungicides and herbicides, and veterinary medicines.

Agricultural and veterinary chemicals help agricultural industries to be more productive and competitive on world markets, and to improve produce quality.

In the wider community, we use them to control pests and weeds in our gardens, as well as in our national parks and nature reserves, and to help control disease-carrying insects, such as mosquitos.

However, we – and people overseas who buy our agricultural produce – need to be confident agricultural and veterinary chemicals are safe to use and are used responsibly.



Managing agricultural and veterinary chemical use

Australia's system for managing agricultural and veterinary chemicals is a risk management system designed to give us confidence that they are safe to use and are used responsibly.

It also encourages us to rely less on these chemicals, where possible, by using natural means to control pests and diseases.

There are six steps in the system with a range of strategies designed to manage the possible risks to people, the environment and trade associated with different aspects of agricultural and veterinary chemical use in Australia. Added together, they deliver a national system for managing agricultural and veterinary chemicals from manufacture to disposal:

System Development and Leadership

- + Registration of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals
- + Control of Use
- + Industry Risk Management Programs (Manufacturers and Distributors)
- + Industry Risk Management Programs (Users)
- + System Improvement
- = Agricultural and Veterinary Chemical Management System

The strategies involve the Australian Government, state and territory governments, agricultural and veterinary chemical manufacturers and users and the general community. Some are applied at a national level, others at an industry, state or local level.



Australia is also active at the international level on agricultural and veterinary chemical issues, such as setting standards for chemical use and for reporting on their use. Australia's participation in international organisations like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and in a range of United Nations programs is led by the Australian Government and enables us to have access to the latest information on agricultural and veterinary chemicals and keeps us up to date in managing the risks associated with them.

For information about other chemicals used in Australia, visit the National Chemical Information Gateway website at www.deh.gov.au/chemicals-gateway.



Useful Contacts

APVMA

General enquiries

Phone: 02 6272 5852 within Australia or +61 2 6272 5852

Email: contact@apvma.gov.au

Community Consultative Committee

Email: ccc@apvma.gov.au

Adverse experiences with agricultural or
veterinary chemicals (AERP)

Phone: 02 6272 3651 within Australia or +61 2 6272 3651

Fax: 02 6271 6442 within Australia or +61 2 6271 6442

FSANZ

Phone: 02 6271 2222 within Australia or +61 2 6271 2222

Department of Environment and Heritage

Phone: 02 6274 1111 within Australia or +61 2 6274 1111

National Occupational Health and Safety Commission

Phone: 02 6279 1000 within Australia or +61 2 6279 1000

Email: info@nohsc.gov.au

Office of Chemical Safety

Web: www.tga.gov.au/chemicals/ocs

Phone: 02 6270 4300 within Australia or +61 2 6270 4300

NSW Department of Primary Industries

Phone: 02 6391 3336 within Australia or +61 2 6391 3336

Email: nsw.agriculture@agric.nsw.gov.au

Victorian Department of Primary Industries

Phone: 136 186 within Australia or +61 3 5332 5000

Email: customer.service@dpi.vic.gov.au

Queensland Department of Primary Industries

Phone: 13 25 23 within Australia or +61 7 3404 6999

Email: callweb@dpi.qld.gov.au

Primary Industries and Resources South Australia

Phone: 08 8226 0549 within Australia or +61 8 8226 0549

Email: PIRSA.RuralChemicals@saugov.sa.gov.au

Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries Water and Environment

Phone: 1300 368 550 within Australia or +61 3 6233 8011

Western Australian Department of Agriculture

Phone: 08 9368 3333 within Australia or +61 8 9368 3333

Northern Territory Department of Business, Industry and Resource Management

Phone: 08 8999 2311 within Australia or +61 8 8999 2311

Avcare/Agsafe/drumMUSTER/ChemClear

Phone: 02 6230 6399 within Australia or +61 2 6230 6399

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VMDA

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Email: vmda@vmda.org.au

National Farmers' Federation

Phone: 02 6273 3855 within Australia or +61 2 6273 3855

ChemCert

Phone: 02 6161 0477 within Australia or +61 2 6161 0477

Email: national@chemcert.org.au

Farmsafe

Phone: 02 6752 8218 within Australia or +61 2 6752 8218

Email: info@farmsafe.org.au

National Residue Survey

Phone: 02 6272 3446 within Australia or +61 2 6272 3446

Email: nrs@daff.gov.au

National Toxics Network

Web: www.oztoxics.org

Phone: 02 6288 5881 within Australia or +61 2 6288 5881

Email: biomat@oztoxics.org

Product Safety and Integrity Committee

for Primary Industries Standing Committee

Email: psic@daff.gov.au

