

Training stresses safety in use of pesticides

In three years, more than 6,000 people in Arizona have learned about safe use of pesticides at one-day classes led by University of Arizona specialists.

These pesticide applicator training sessions at 25 sites throughout the state have helped many of the participants meet requirements for certification as private or commercial applicators.

Demand and attendance peaked early in the series, reports Dr. David Byrne, UA Extension pesticide training specialist. "But we've maintained a steady level over the past nine months," he said in April. "Actually, we thought we'd be through by now, but we still get turn-outs of 20 people. We'll keep making trips for that many."

By federal law, only certified applicators may buy and use pesticides that are classified for "restricted use." The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies for "restricted use" any pesticide that is potentially hazardous to users or to non-target animals or plants. Twenty-three are restricted and 14 others are proposed as additions to the list.

At a typical training session in Mohave Valley this spring, Byrne began the morning with a description of pesticides and the regulations that govern their use. An audience of 11 in a room at Don Brown's Spirit Farms listened to the presentations by Byrne and Extension Assistant Diane Ullman.

Byrne said that pests include any organisms that compete with humans for food or fiber, or directly attack humans. Therefore, pesticides include herbicides and fungicides as well as insecticides and rodenticides. In the past 40 years, the number of pesticides has exploded from 19 to about 45,000.

Ullman discussed the importance of using pesticides safely. Most pesticide accidents occur during mixing and loading. The most important warning, which appears on all pesticides, is to keep them away from children. Ullman displayed personal protective equipment for pesticide users, including goggles, respirators, unlined gloves, hats, aprons, and disposable paper coveralls. She gave two important emergency phone numbers: (602) 626-6016 for the 24-hour, UA Poison Control Center, and (800) 424-9300 for CHEMTREC's information about cleaning up spilled chemicals.

Other parts of the session focused on label information, formulations and calculations, pest biology, and environment. Byrne and Ullman stressed that the label on a pesticide container is a legal document. It tells what uses are permitted, how to use the chemical, what precautions are necessary and how to dispose of empty containers. The instructors also emphasized the importance of correct pest identification.

Though applicator certification is a federal requirement, the rules for getting certified are set by each state.



Mohave County Agent Robin Grumbles (left) visits with William Hayes, Lee Lane and Mats Matsushita of Riviera and Bullhead City.

In Arizona, the State Board of Pesticide Control regulates certification for all pesticide uses except urban and structural (e.g. houses, trucks, docks) uses. Those are regulated by the Structural Pest Control Board. A member of the appropriate board attends each official certification training session. Chuck Parisek of the Board of Pesticide Control validated the Mohave Valley session.



Extension Assistant Diane Ullman displays a respirator with replaceable cartridges.

The UA Cooperative Extension Service is responsible for providing the training. Agricultural agents in each county schedule the sessions as needed. Mohave County Agent Robin Grumbles arranged and attended the Mohave Valley session.

No certification is required for using non-restricted pesticides. Many of the private applicators who complete a training session do not bother to pay the \$15 certification fee if they do not plan to use restricted chemicals. By April 1979, out of the 6,024 participants since the training series began, 2,381 had been certified as private applicators and 2,197 as commercial applicators, including structural ones.

Anyone who uses or supervises use of pesticides on someone else's property, for pay, needs a commercial applicator's certificate. Producers of agricultural commodities, including nursery stock, who use pesticides only on their own or their employer's property, are eligible for private applicator's certification. People who do

not produce agricultural commodities are not allowed private certification to buy or use restricted pesticides.

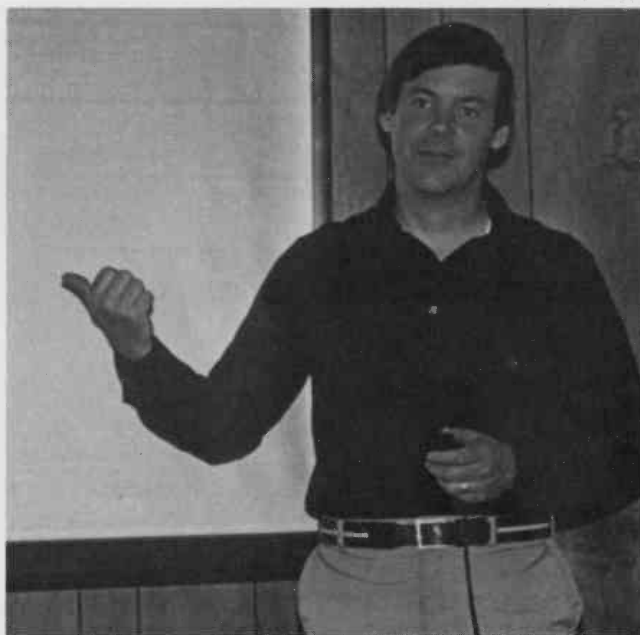
To be certified, commercial applicators must pass a written test and pay a \$30 fee. Private applicators have the choice of taking the test or merely attending one of the certification training sessions. They must also pay a \$15 fee.

For economy, the UA training team usually combines several sessions into one trip from Tucson. The Mohave Valley session was sandwiched between others in Kingman and Lake Havasu City. On the same trip, Extension Entomologist Dr. Dave Langston of Phoenix led an instructional meeting in Kingman about urban pest problems.

The training sessions do not vary much from place to place, according to Byrne. "When we give examples, we know to talk about cattle pests instead of corn earworms when we're in Payson, but we try to leave specific local problems to the county agents. You can't predict very well who's going to be in the audience."

The content of the sessions does change with time, however. "We're always updating them when EPA changes the 'restricted use' list, or when there are new hazards to alert people to," said Byrne. "There have been new problems with the urban-agricultural interface, so we try to remind people to be considerate of neighbors when they're using pesticides."

Byrne once felt that farmers who had been using pesticides for 20 years or so would see the training as an annoyance. "But the response has been generally positive," he reported. "I think they're finding that we can teach them a few new things and remind them of things that are useful."



Extension Specialist David Byrne stresses the importance of accurate identification of pests.