

News



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Threat to geese in Willamette Valley leads to pesticide civil penalties

The Oregon Department of Agriculture has issued civil penalties to five Willamette Valley growers totaling \$8,405 in connection with the misuse of a zinc phosphide product during the 2008 and 2009 growing seasons. Instances of geese deaths from zinc phosphide have been documented in the valley beginning in 2005. The penalties stem from investigations performed by ODA's Pesticides Division, and in one case, includes a higher civil penalty amount for gross negligence and willful misconduct.

In all five cases, Restricted Use Pesticide products containing zinc phosphide, a rodenticide, were used to control voles that were damaging crops. The product labels clearly indicate that non-target species, such as migratory geese, are vulnerable to zinc phosphide. The labels state that the products can only be applied under certain conditions.

The following have received civil penalties for applying a pesticide product in a faulty, careless, or negligent manner:

JTB Farms of Cornelius- \$6,000 for applying a zinc phosphide product to a grass seed field in September 2008, contrary to label directions. Only below ground product placement was allowed. The product was unlawfully applied onto the field surface. ODA determined the violation occurred from gross negligence or willful misconduct and issued the maximum civil penalty allowed by law.

Beltview Farms, Inc. of Yamhill- \$629 for applying a zinc phosphide product to a clover field in March 2009. The product was not labeled for use on clover.

Dean Freeborn of Rickreall-\$592 for applying a zinc phosphide product to a grass seed field above ground in April 2009. The product was only allowed for above ground application from May 1 through August 31.

David Fazio of Portland-\$592 for applying a zinc phosphide product to a grass seed field above ground on Sauvie Island in March 2009. The product was only allowed for above ground application from May 1 through August 31.

Alan Schaaf of Hillsboro- \$592 for applying a zinc phosphide product to a grass seed field above ground in January 2009, The product was only allowed for above ground application from May 1 through August 31.

ODA continues to provide outreach and education to growers and industry groups in the Willamette Valley regarding the use of zinc phosphide and its potential impact on migratory birds. To protect geese, zinc phosphide use in grass seed fields is limited to below ground placement from September through April.