



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Survey finds Puget Sound homeowners need better education on pesticide use

OLYMPIA – A [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) survey of Puget Sound residents found more than half used a pesticide in the previous year, but many did not follow instructions on the labels or used a product that was not intended for the pest they were treating.

Nearly 3,000 people responded to a March 2013 survey of residents in 11 counties covering the Puget Sound region. The survey was sent out to learn more about residential use of pesticides in urban areas.

As part of the project, two other surveys were conducted through interviews with commercial pesticide applicators and public agencies, such as municipalities and public works agencies.

The project was prompted by a [2011 Department of Ecology](#) study that identified the urban use of pesticides as a potential source of copper in freshwater and marine areas in the Puget Sound basin. Copper is toxic to fish and other aquatic species, with young salmon especially vulnerable.

As part of the survey work, researchers reviewed pesticides available to consumers in retail outlets, and found few copper products on store shelves.

Other findings in the "[Non-Agricultural Pesticide Use in Puget Sound Counties](#)" report include:

- 51.5 percent of respondents had applied a pesticide in the previous 12-month period.
 - Of those, about half applied the pesticide 4 times or less a year.
- 75 percent did not hire a professional, but applied the treatment themselves.
- Pesticide treatments were typically applied between March and September.
- Weeds and moss were the most cited reason a pesticide was applied, with ants and other insects second.
- Neonicotinoids and pyrethroids, two chemical classes that can effect bee populations, especially when applied to plants in bloom, accounted for about 85 percent of the known insecticides used by homeowners.

Interviews with eight commercial pest control companies of varying sizes found that the majority of their business is for residential applications, with ants and rodents making up the bulk of the work. The majority of public operators interviewed use what is called Integrated Pest Management, a combined approach that includes the use of pesticides, as well as manual removal of weeds and other pests.

Ecology partnered with WSDA for the project, providing \$135,000 for the survey. Of 15,000 surveys mailed, 2,931 were returned, a response rate of almost 20 percent.

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