



Forest Facts

HERBICIDE USE AND FORESTRY

May 2013

What are “herbicides”?

Herbicides are a class of pesticides used to control unwanted plants. Herbicides are used in agriculture, residential and urban areas, forestry, industrial sites, railroads, and other settings.

How are herbicides used in forestry?

Oregon’s Forest Practices Act requires planting of tree seedlings within two years after a timber harvest. To meet this objective, both families with small properties and large industrial companies use herbicides to control unwanted vegetation so tree seedlings can receive adequate water, nutrients and light. Herbicides are also used by many forest landowners to control damaging, invasive plants such as knotweed, which can take over streamside areas and destroy native plants.

Some landowners see herbicides as the most cost-effective means of achieving reforestation goals after logging or fire, and for converting brushy land to forested land; other landowners choose to meet their goals without using herbicides. Other tools available to control unwanted vegetation include cutting brush by hand or with power tools, grubbing grass sod from around individual trees, mowing, and placing mulch mats around individual trees.

How often are herbicides used in forestry?

Forest landowners are responsible for only 4 percent of all pesticides (including herbicides) used every year in Oregon. In Western Oregon forests, herbicides are typically applied in the first two or three years after harvest. Because of different management methods on the slower-growing forests in eastern Oregon, herbicides are used much less in that region of the state.

What laws regulate forest herbicide use?

All pesticides used in the United States must be registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and must carry federally approved labels describing permitted uses and appropriate protection measures. To be registered, pesticides must be tested for effects on humans and the environment. In Oregon, pesticide sellers and applicators must also comply with the state's Pesticide Control law (Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 634) which requires state product registration and applicator licensing, and prohibits faulty, careless or negligent applications.

Users of pesticides on forest land must follow an extra layer natural resource protection laws in the Oregon Forest Practices Act, administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry. The Forest Practices Act

requires operators to protect soil, air, fish, wildlife, and water quality through measures that include:

- Preventing leaks and spills
- Avoiding aerial herbicide applications within 60 feet of fish-use streams or drinking water streams, and avoiding ground-based applications within 10 feet of those streams.
- Leaving and protecting trees and plants along streams following logging.

The Department of Forestry works with landowners, loggers, and pesticide applicators to help them comply with forest practice rules; in most cases, compliance is achieved voluntarily. In a few instances, enforcement is needed. Under rules administered by the Departments of Forestry and Environmental Quality, if a spill occurs on forestland, those responsible are required to report the incident and take any necessary action to contain and clean up the chemical.

Measures protect water quality

Forestry laws and rules have had demonstrated success in protecting streams [2000 State of the Environment Report for the Oregon Progress Board; produced by Oregon State University].

The Department has conducted monitoring efforts on pesticides since the 1970's, including:

- Frequent sampling downstream of spray operations between 1980-1987.
- Specific monitoring of projects occurring in 1992, 1993, and 2000.
- A pesticides best management practice (BMP) compliance element within a larger 2002 best management practice study.

In nearly all cases, either there were no detectable residues or the residues were below levels expected to be harmful to humans, fish, wildlife, or riparian vegetation.

How can I get information on planned herbicide applications?

Before doing a pesticide application on forestland, the applicator must file a notification of operations with the Oregon Department of Forestry. The notification describes the who, what, when, where, and how of the planned application. The department maintains a database of the notification information from this system available to the public upon request. To find out what forest chemical applications, or other forest operations, are planned in your area, sign up for ODF's subscription service (there is a fee for this service).

To sign up, call or visit your nearest ODF office or ODF's Salem headquarters (503-945-7200). You can also find the subscription form and more information about the FACTS subscription service by visiting the department Website at <http://egov.oregon.gov/ODF/> (Click on "Private Forests" then select "Forest Operations" in the upper right corner of the screen, and then "FACTS Data").

What if I think a violation of the law has occurred?

If you think a violation of the law has occurred, please contact the local Oregon Department of Forestry office. Staff there will investigate your report and provide information back to you on their findings.

For additional information:

- Oregon Department of Agriculture (Oregon's lead agency for pesticide use), <http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/>
- U.S. Department of Environmental Quality, ["http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/" www.epa.gov/pesticides/](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/)
- The Pesticide Analytical and Response Center, ["http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/pare.shtml"](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/pare.shtml) www.oregon.gov/ODA/PEST/pare.shtml
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, ["http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/" www.oregon.gov/DEQ/](http://www.oregon.gov/DEQ/)