

5. Truth in Advertising?: Analysis of Pesticide Product Ads

- Objectives:
- To promote understanding of the role of advertising in shaping public demand for pesticide products and public perception of pesticide risk.
 - To promote understanding of current state and federal laws governing pesticide advertising.
 - To seek enforcement of state or federal pesticide advertising laws against particular ads.

Activities:

- Read some background articles about pesticide advertising and safety claims.
- Contact your state Attorney General's office or Agriculture Department for information about your state's laws and enforcement.
- Collect pesticide product or service advertisements from newspapers, magazines, billboards, phone books, or TV. Analyze the ads for truth of claims, effectiveness of advertising techniques, etc.
- Write a summary, and make recommendations on how consumers can influence pesticide use through buying choices. If you find ads that seem to violate state or federal laws, forward those ads to the appropriate state or federal agencies [e.g., your state's Attorney General, state Department of Agriculture, or the U.S. EPA or U.S. FTC] along with a cover letter asking for enforcement action.

Background articles:

- Abrams, R. 1988. Consumer Protection and Lawn Care: New York Takes Action. *Journal of Pesticide Reform* 8(2):10-12.
- Riley, B. 1994. Texas Gets Tough On Pest Control Services' False Safety Claims While Federal Inaction Continues. *Journal of Pesticide Reform* 14(1):26.
- _____. 1994. Pesticide pushers punished! *Organic Gardening* (November).

Other Resources:

U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO)
PO Box 6015
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

Two GAO publications of interest are:

- Lawn Care Pesticides: Risks Remain Uncertain While Prohibited Safety Claims Continue*. GAO/RCED-90-134 (March 1990). [Chapter 2: Enforcement Actions Not Being Taken on Pesticide Safety Claims]
- NonAgricultural Pesticides: Risks and Regulation*. GAO/RCED-86-97 (April 1986). [Chapter 3: The General Public Receives Limited and Misleading Information on Pesticide Hazards]

NCAP
PO Box 1393
Eugene, OR 97440
(541) 344-5044

Copies of the following are available from NCAP:

- EPA draft "Advertising Guidance Position Paper", May 1992. This document is being finalized.
- Federal Trade Commission (FTC), *Guidelines for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims*, July 1992.



Enforcement Agencies:

- U.S. EPA/Compliance Division
Office of Prevention, Pesticides and
Toxic Substances
401 M Street SW (72-03)
Washington, DC 20460
- Federal Trade Commission
FTC Building
6th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20580