

News Column

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CHLORPYRIFOS BAN

The headline is misleading, but intentional. While all uses of chlorpyrifos haven't actually been banned, food residue tolerance levels have been reduced to zero,...making it risky to use chlorpyrifos around both crops and livestock.

Products you might recognize that contain chlorpyrifos include Dursban, Lorsban, and some insecticide ear tags. It is those insecticide ear tags containing chlorpyrifos that we need to address today.

I have a partially used box of fly tags in my vaccine refrigerator, with the original package folded over and clipped shut, and the whole mess sealed in a Ziplock bag. They are a few years old, but I expect them to still work because of how they have been stored.

My concern is that I don't know the active ingredient in those tags. If it is chlorpyrifos, then I'm going to have to decide what to do with them. They are in the original wrapper, so I can check the active ingredient — I just need to remember to do that before I stick one in the ear of an old ewe this spring.

Sheep tend to flock together (pun intended), so it doesn't take many insecticide ear tags to control the fly population on a group of 25 ewes. I usually put fly tags in just two or three ewes each year, so a box of tags might last several years at our place.

A severe fly infestation on freshly shorn sheep can get really ugly, really fast. Four-H lambs are the most susceptible to fly strike because we shear them closer than we shear the rest

of the flock. We protect the 4-H lambs after shearing with daily fly sprays, and sometimes by covering them with sheep blankets. It is the older flock of ewes where we like to use fly tags.

The advice we have been given by our beef cattle specialists at K-State is to only use chlorpyrifos fly tags in heifers or cows that will not be offered for processing within one year of tag removal.

That's a long withdrawal period!

Because the food level tolerance for chlorpyrifos is now zero – effective March 1, 2022 – we need to be really careful. The easiest and best solution is to just use a different product. Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate and there are other organophosphate products on the market. Just choose a different product and you're good.

I'm not an alarmist, so I don't go off the deep end every time a product is pulled from the market. If you have used chlorpyrifos in the past, and followed label precautions, don't expect to suddenly have exposure symptoms tomorrow. There is no reason to worry about past exposure.

While I see no reason to get excited, I do think it is important to follow current regulations. Therefore, I recommend checking your supply of old fly tags and be careful using them.

Careful use is going to include good record keeping. If you install a chlorpyrifos ear tag in any animal, you absolutely need to keep a record of when the tag was installed, and when it was removed. You need to wait to offer that animal for processing at least 12 months after tag removal.

Yes. Those tags need to be removed, and I can loan you my tag cutter if you don't have one.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-

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