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ASK THE
AG EXPERT

Travis Hohn

QUESTION:

I received a crop insurance claim check from a different company and don't think the policy worked as it was explained to me. Would you look over my coverage without me having to buy a policy from you?

ANSWER:

Yes, we can provide a free crop insurance review. If you have a copy of the policy, we can check to see if you received the coverage you expected. Coverage and the claims process can be complex. That's why we have specialists dedicated to crop and livestock insurance. With our exclusive AgriView® program we can help analyze your crop insurance options for cost impact and return.

Travis Hohn is an Insurance Specialist for Farm Credit Services of America.

Submit your ag financing question to www.AskTheAgExpert.com



Farm Credit Services
of America

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GROW

NewsWatch

Ag study offers data on pesticides, cancer



NURSE
MURF

By HELEN MURPHY

THE Agriculture Health Study is the most in-depth study ever conducted on the health of pesticide applicators. Enrolled between 1993 and 1997 in Iowa and North Carolina, 57,284 pesticide applicators and 32,333 spouses of applicators are being followed for various health outcomes.

Detailed information is collected on pesticide use, other agricultural exposures, work practices, diet, exercise, alcohol consumption, tobacco use, medical conditions, family history of cancer and other occupations. A special focus is on cancer, which is reported and linked to the study participants through cancer registries as they occur after enrollment.

To date, the overall occurrence of cancers among applicators and spouses is less than among other people of the same age, sex and race in those two states. Also, cancers previously found associated to pesticides in other studies (Hodgkin's disease, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, multiple myeloma, leukemia and brain cancer) were not increased.

However, compared to the general population, a few cancer types occurred more frequently among the applicators and their spouses. Some cases were associated with high use of specific chemicals. While still requiring more study, slightly more-than-expected ovarian cancer among female applicators and melanoma among applicators' wives were found.

Further study

Slightly higher rates (14%) of prostate cancer occurred with applicators of restricted-use pesticides. Those using methyl bromide had a higher risk for prostate cancer; the highest users showing an almost three-and-a-half times more risk for prostate cancer. The other chemicals linked to prostate cancer (butylate, chlorpyrifos, couma-

phos, fonofos, permethrin for animal use and phorate) occurred only in applicators whose brother or father had prostate cancer. This suggests that these chemicals may interact with prostate cancer genes making the individual more susceptible.

Farmers smoke half as much as the general population, and likewise have an overall lower rate of lung cancer by 2.27 times. But greater lung cancer risk was associated to frequent use of two herbicides — metolchlor and pentimethalin — and two insecticides — chlorpyrifos and diazinon. This was independent of smoking, gender, age and total days of other pesticide use. However before a firm cause-and-effect relationship can be established, more study is needed to confirm this first-ever seen association.

Caution heeded

Another issue under study is the link between pesticides, which act like the body's own estrogen, and breast cancer. Fewer women in the study developed breast cancer than the general population. Could women who live and work on the farm, or apply pesticides, have healthier lifestyles, more physical activity or more vitamin D from being in the sun?

Researchers are looking into these issues. On the other hand, a modest increase in risk was seen in the wives of applicators of a few chemicals including 2,4,5-TP and to a lesser extent dieldrin, captan and 2,4,5-T. Of these, only captan is available for use in the U.S.

While risks do not reach the magnitude of carcinogens like tobacco (smoking causes a twentyfold increase in cancer), this information suggests that erring on the side of caution by safely handling and judiciously using pesticides is still prudent.

Murphy, director of Outreach at the Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center at the University of Washington, may be reached by phone at 206-616-5906 or by e-mail at hmurf@u.washington.edu.

■ For more on the study, go online to aghealth.nci.nih.gov.

NewsWatch Briefs

Oregon State faculty ranks high

A new ranking of graduate programs at research universities around the country shows that Oregon State University faculty is exceptionally productive, ranking among the top 10 U.S. universities in eight of the disciplines measured. OSU earned top national rankings in wildlife sciences and second in fisheries science. The university ranked fourth in zoology, fifth in plant pathology and forest resources, and seventh in agricultural economics. The rankings were published this fall in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture reports that after nine years of comparison, clear differences between organic and conventional crop production systems are emerging. This includes longer rotations in organic farming, and in some cases, profits were increased over conventional operations. The conclusions were drawn from experimental plots set up at Iowa State University's Neely-Kinyon Research Farm near Greenfield, Iowa. This is believed to be the largest randomized, replicated comparison of organic and conventional crops in the nation.

Montana 4-H honored

The International Programs Committee of 4-H International has honored the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development's international exchange programs for its outstanding quality. Montana families this summer hosted 27 Japanese delegates, a Finish delegate, and visitors from Austria, Taiwan, England, Northern Ireland and Germany. Montana youths were sent to Japan, Australia, Finland, the United Kingdom and Germany.

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Snowpack, water supply report optimistic for PNW

The outlook for the new water year and 2008 water supply is optimistic as the entire Snow Telemetry are in the Pacific Northwest has received above-average precipitation. After one of the driest summers on record, the vegetation and soils greatly needed the rain to increase soil moisture before the onset of the winter snowpack. However, not all central Idaho streams increased in response to the precipitation, reports the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. Still, this is a good sign, since often several storms are needed to saturate the soils after a typical dry Idaho summer. Saturated soils are efficient at producing more streamflow when the snow melts.

NewsWatch Briefs

Oregon signs historic trade agreement with China

Oregon has become the first state to reach an agreement with the People's Republic of China on testing and certification of food products both exported and imported to and from China. A historic Memorandum of Understanding signed in Portland, Ore., has paved the way for added assurance that agricultural food products going in both directions meet the import standards and requirements for quality and food safety as defined by the destination country. The agreement will lead to an official recognition of the Oregon Department of Agriculture's laboratory and Export Service Program by the Chinese equivalent of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

New Zealand picked for 2009 World Potato Congress

Idaho spud producers will have to travel a bit farther than Boise to attend the next World Potato Congress. The session, last held in Idaho in 2006, will open in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2009. The Congress is held every three years. The seventh Congress will occur for the first time in a South Pacific nation, hosted by the Potato Product Group of Horticulture New Zealand. More than 500 delegates are expected to attend. "Christchurch, the Garden City and Festival Center, with many outstanding contrasting amenities, will be an ideal venue for delegates to our tri-annual Congress," says Allan Parker, World Potato Congress Inc. president.

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