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The Pesticide Notification Network: An E-Source for Agriculture

Jane M. Thomas

Washington State University, jmthomas@tricity.wsu.edu

Catherine Daniels

Washington State University, cdaniels@wsu.edu



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The Pesticide Notification Network: An E-Source for Agriculture

Abstract

The Pesticide Notification Network (PNN) is WSU's unique way of distributing information about changes in pesticide registration to the agricultural community. The PNN uses a Web-based computer program to build a targeted distribution list for each notification and then distributes the notifications via e-mail. PNN users tailor their subscriptions by both crop and pesticide type. Using the PNN's capabilities, a tree fruit entomologist can elect to only receive notifications about insecticides for use on tree fruit, while the Washington Hop Commission receives every hop-related PNN notification. Using programming capabilities the PNN distributes the right information to the right people.

Jane M. Thomas

PNN Database Coordinator
Richland, Washington
jmthomas@tricity.wsu.edu

Catherine Daniels

WSPRS Director
Puyallup, Washington
cdaniels@wsu.edu

Washington State University

With the Pesticide Notification Network (PNN), Washington State University (WSU) has developed a unique method for updating the agricultural community about pesticide regulatory changes in Washington. Through computer programming, the PNN delivers targeted pesticide registration information, distributing the right information to the right people.

Keeping Up to Date

Washington's agriculture is very diverse. We rank third behind California and Florida in specialty crop farmgate value (Jerry Baron, personal communication, March 21, 2005) and produce on the order of 250 different crops. Growers often rely on Section 18 and 24c/Special Local Needs (SLN) registrations for uses not provided on Section 3 pesticide labels. The need for tracking the availability of effective pesticides for use on specialty crops is well recognized in the state and, in fact, is discussed in the mandates for both WSU's Food and Environmental Quality Laboratory (RCW 15.92.060) and the Washington State Commission on Pesticide Registration (WSCPR) (RCW 15.92.100).

The need for pesticide registration information stems from the volume of activity. According to EPA's Section 18 Web site <<http://www.epa.gov/opprd001/section18/>>, in 2004 Washington led the nation with activity on 19 exemption requests. In 2004, the Washington State Department of Agriculture issued 40 SLNs <<http://ext.wsu.edu/pnn/>> and as of February 8, 2005 Washington led the United States with 313 active SLN registrations (Robert Schultz, personal communication, February 8, 2005).

In Washington, as in most states, throughout a typical year there is a great deal of pesticide regulatory activity (new product registrations, cancellations, and label revisions). Because we produce a large number of crops, we have a large number of registered pesticides; therefore we have many regulatory changes to track. A quick review of pesticide registration in Washington via the Pesticide Information Center On-Line (PICOL, <http://picol.cahe.wsu.edu/labels/Labels.php>) shows that:

- Of the more than 12,000 pesticides registered in Washington, 7,449 are commercial-use products and
- Of the 1503 new labels registered in 2004, 914 were commercial-use products.

With the number of specialty crops grown in the state and the high volume of labeling activity, it is important that growers, crop advisors, commodity/commission staff, researchers, and Extension personnel receive up-to-date information about available pest management tools. WSU, through the PNN, has found an innovative way to deliver this information.

System Description

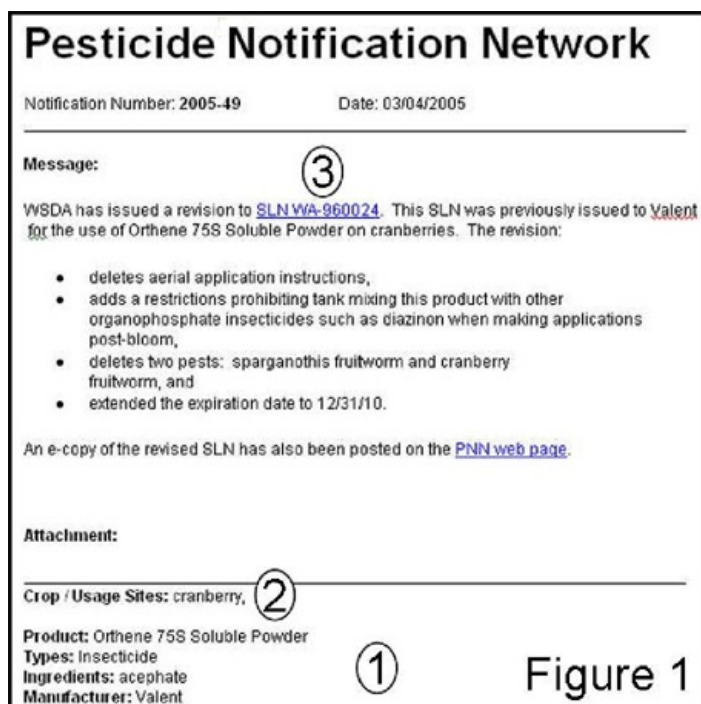
The PNN provides a means of delivering targeted information directly to the agricultural community about pesticide uses important to Washington agriculture. The system, which is free to subscribers, tracks:

- New product registrations;
- Label changes;
- New or amended Section 18 exemptions;
- New, revised, or cancelled SLN registrations;
- Re-registration eligibility decisions (REDs);
- Proposed product cancellations and use deletions; and
- miscellaneous/regulatory information.

While distributing this type of information is in no way unique, we think our targeted delivery system is. The PNN is operated using a Web-based relational database. Users subscribe to the PNN on-line, customizing their subscription by crop and pesticide type.

Each PNN notification is linked to one or more pesticide products and then to one or more crops (Figure 1, items 1 & 2). When the notification is to be sent, the computer program builds a distribution list first based on the crop(s) selected, then based on the type of pesticide. Once a notification is completed it is distributed directly to the subscriber by e-mail.

Figure 1.
PNN Notification 2005-49



For example, take a look at PNN notification 2005-49 (Figure 1). This notification discussed the revision of SLN WA-960024. This SLN provided for the use of Orthene 75S Soluble Powder for insect control on cranberries. (Note item 3, a link to a copy of the revised SLN.) To build the distribution list for this notification, the PNN database first compiled a list of everyone in the system who desires cranberry information. Next, the program eliminated everyone who did not subscribe for insecticide information. This notification was distributed to the Washington Cranberry Alliance, cranberry growers, and Extension agents and entomologists who subscribed to receive cranberry information. By using this targeted distribution, we avoid flooding already overtaxed growers, Extension staff, and researchers with information not pertinent to their work.

The Numbers

The PNN delivers between 300 and 350 notifications each year. In 2004, 325 PNN notifications were distributed using 16,621 e-mails. There are currently 221 subscribers to the system.

Operational Information

The nuts-and-bolts part of the operation of the PNN (reviewing revised labels and new registrations) is possible because the Washington State Pest Management Resource Service office also operates PICOL, a searchable label database. Because of PICOL, the Washington State Pest Management Resource Service office receives copies of all Washington's new and revised pesticide labels. As the PICOL Database Coordinator processes this information, she sorts out PNN-related registrations and notes relevant changes on any revised labels. New and revised labels are forwarded to the PNN Coordinator for processing.

The operation of the PNN is funded with an annual grant from the WSCPR. The grant currently covers 48% of an FTE for the PNN Database Coordinator, 20% of the PICOL Database Coordinator, and 37.5% of a file clerk.

Beyond E-Mail

While the unique feature of the PNN is the targeted information distribution, the PNN also provides a Web page <<http://ext.wsu.edu/pnn>> with:

- Copies of all PNN notifications;
- Lists of both the SLNs and Section 18s;
- Electronic copies of most Washington SLNs and Section 18 labels;
- Search screens for notifications, SLNs, and Section 18s;
- Postings of miscellaneous information; and
- Subscriber links.

Subscriber Satisfaction

We have surveyed the PNN subscribers twice since the system was started in the spring of 1997 (Thomas 1998, Thomas 2002). In both surveys, PNN users reported that they were satisfied with PNN services and indicated that information was both timely and useful. In the 2001 survey, we asked if the PNN information was redundant of other information sources, and 85% reported that it was not. Further, 79% of those responding reported that they were either formally or informally distributing PNN information to others.

References

RCW15.92.060, Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 15.92, Center For Sustaining Agriculture And Natural Resources, Section 060, Laboratory Responsibilities.

RCW15.92.100, Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 15.92 Center For Sustaining Agriculture And Natural Resources, Section 100, Commission on pesticide registration -- Duties.

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