

# Consumer Alert: Illegal Pesticide Products

**Pesticide Control Program**  
NJ Department of  
Environmental Protection  
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Illegal pesticides can sometimes be found for sale from street vendors or in small neighborhood stores. They are often much more toxic than pesticides registered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and can hurt you and your family as well as the targeted pests. They exist in many forms, including illegal flea and tick repellents for pets, antibacterial cleansers, mothballs, and other products that claim to get rid of household pests.

Across the country, EPA has initiated an effort to protect consumers from these products. However, consumers may unknowingly purchase these illegal products. Sometimes the illegal products may look similar to and make the same claims as their legal counterparts, but these products have not been thoroughly tested. And since the products are unregistered, their labels have not been reviewed for clear directions and safety warnings.

Below are some common products produced and sold illegally:

**Illegal naphthalene moth repellent products -- mothballs --** pose a hazard to young children. Mothballs can be easily mistaken for candy, or simply tempt young children to touch and play with them. Recent studies have linked naphthalene to illnesses, including nasal cancer.

**Illegal Pet Products**, including foreign-labeled, unregistered versions of the common pet products Advantage and Frontline, have been illegally imported and sold throughout the U.S. Though registered for use in other countries, some foreign-labeled versions have omitted important warnings, especially those pertaining to children, and overseas companies often give doses in metric units, which can cause Americans to accidentally over-dose or under-dose pets.

**Illegal Insecticide Chalk** is also known as "Miraculous Chalk" or "Chinese Chalk." This chalk can sometimes be found in a neighborhood store or on the street for about \$1 a box. It usually bears a label in both English and Chinese. Sometimes the manufacturer claims that the chalk is "harmless to human beings and animals" and "safe to use." These claims are untrue.

**"Tres Pasitos"** is imported illegally from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Its name means "three little steps" in English, because after eating it, this is all mice can muster before dying. The active ingredient is a chemical called aldicarb, considered by the EPA to be a very toxic chemical and one never to be used in your home. Children are especially vulnerable to poisoning by aldicarb when it is sprinkled around the home to control roaches, mice and rats. Exposure to high amounts of aldicarb can cause weakness, blurred vision, headache, nausea, tearing, sweating, and tremors in people. Very high doses can kill people, because it can paralyze the respiratory system.

**Antibacterial products.** Many common household products, ranging from cleansers to cutting boards, claim to protect against bacteria. Such claims are illegal unless the product is registered

with EPA or the claim only applies to protecting the item itself from damage by microorganisms, not to provide additional health benefits. In addition, the pesticide used to treat the item must be registered for use in or on the treated item.

## What You Should Do

Here are some simple rules to follow when looking for a pesticide to use in your home:

- Look for an **EPA registration number** on the pesticide's container. This number tells you that EPA has reviewed health and environmental information about the pesticide. The label must also say the product is okay to you in your home.
- Look for a list of the **active ingredients** on the label. Any product registered with EPA must state the active ingredients on the label.
- Trust your instincts. If a person offers you a product on the street, chances are it is illegal and could harm you and your family. Shop for pesticides only in stores you know and trust. If you find a product that is packed or wrapped suspiciously, don't buy it.
- If you find a suspicious pesticide product, call the NJDEP's Pesticide Control Program at 609-984-6568.

**Please contact the following if you need more information:**

**NJDEP Pesticide Control Program**

General information: 609-984-6507

To report a pesticide misuse: 609-984-6568

Website: [www.pcpnj.org](http://www.pcpnj.org)

**National Pesticide Telecommunications Network**

For questions on possible health effects: 1-800-858-7378

**New Jersey Poison Information System**

For emergency situations involving pesticide exposure or poisoning:

1-800-222-1222