UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

UF/IFAS Extension Hendry County

Author: Gene McAvoy, Extension Agent IV Emeritus

Understanding and Managing Pesticide Drift – Bullet Points

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Pesticides are used widely in agriculture to control pests. It is estimated that on a worldwide basis, pests destroy up to a half of food supplies. Without pesticides, the food losses could be even more significant. Pesticides increase work productivity, profits, and export incomes. Without pesticides, world hunger would increase, as would the price of food.

While pesticides play an important role in the production of food and fiber and are indispensable in modern agricultural systems, the drift of spray from pesticide applications can expose people, plants and animals, and the environment to pesticide residues that can cause health and environmental effects and property damage.

Both federal and state pesticide laws address the subject of drift.

Pesticide spray drift is the movement of pesticide dust or droplets through the air at the time of application or soon after, to any site other than the area intended. Pesticide droplets are produced by spray nozzles used in pesticide application equipment used to spray pesticides on crops, forests, turf and home gardens. Other pesticides may be formulated as very fine dry particles (commonly referred to as dust formulations) which can easily move away from the target site under windy conditions.

After reading this article, applicators will:

- be able to define drift and distinguish between the most common types of pesticide drift,
- understand the factors that influence drift
- be able to implement common sense strategies to reduce drift
- be aware of federal and state laws that govern drift.

Development and widespread urbanization has led to much of Florida's agricultural production being in areas of close proximity to the general public, including residential subdivisions, assisted living facilities, hospitals, and schools. Such sensitive sites heighten the need for drift mitigation measures to be taken by applicators of pesticides, particularly in areas where children and the elderly are present.

Drift can lead to litigation, financially damaging court costs, and appeals to restrict or ban the use of crop protection materials. By understanding the factors that favor drift and implementing strategies to manage drift, applicators can play a major role in reducing pesticide drift and its negative consequences.