

Hazards in the Home

Indoor Air Pollution

Pests

Most pest killers contain deadly chemicals and should be used only as a last resort. Research in the US has linked the use of pesticides in the home with some childhood cancers such as leukaemia.¹

Using Aerosol sprays puts the poison into the air, contaminating everything, and products designed to be left lying around can cause harm to animals and friendly insects.

Companies producing these products know that they are harmful, but absolve themselves of any blame by putting a warning on the label.

Below are some of the nasty chemicals found in over the counter products:

- **amitraz** - suspected endocrine disrupter.
- **diazinon, dichlorvos, fenitrothion, permethrin and pyrethrin** - suspected endocrine disrupters, toxic to animals.
- **fenthion, phosmet, propoxur** - nerve disrupters, toxic to animals.¹

Wood preservatives contain ingredients which are toxic. People who have applied timber treatments have experienced headaches, nausea, skin rashes, tiredness, sore eyes, nose and throat. In some extreme cases people have suffered spasms and others have developed rare cancers.¹

Lindane, an organochlorine pesticide, is banned in other European countries. Lindane which causes cancer and hormone disruption, nervous and immune system damage, birth defects and behavioural changes, is sold to the general public - as an insect killer and wood preservative.

The chemical and pest control industries make their living from spraying pests with chemicals. They have a vested interest in having buildings treated with their products and services. There are strong arguments that the chemical treatment of timber pests is less effective, more expensive and more dangerous than alternative traditional methods, which include management of temperature, ventilation and replacement of damaged timber.¹



"It will drop a flock of seagulls at fifty yards"

Ritche



Alternatives

First try and find the source of the infestation or why it is occurring. This is the case whether it is insects or rodents. You are not likely to resolve the problem unless you tackle it at source.

Ants rarely invade homes in great numbers and good housekeeping is usually enough to control them. Sprinkle dried mint or chilli powder, paprika or dried peppermint on the ground where they come in to deter them.² A more drastic method is the use of borax where the ants are entering.³

Flies hate basil and mint plants. Grow them inside in pots and outside near windows and doors. They also hate orange peel, lemon peel and cloves, which you can position strategically.²

A **flea treatment** is to feed your pet garlic or brewer's yeast, mixed into their food.

For advice on the best way to tackle pests, including rodents contact: The Pesticides trust, Eurolink Centre, 49 Effra Road, London, SW2 1BZ, UK, tel 0171 274 8895. www.gn.apc.org/destrust

Neither **dry** nor **wet** rots survives in dry, well ventilated, conditions. To prevent their attack or further development, damp problems must be corrected. No amount of chemicals will prevent rot attack in timber that continues to be affected by damp. However, a borax solution can be used to treat wood without having to remove the affected areas.

Control of Dust Mites

Dust mites can cause asthma, but to chemically treat them is to risk poisoning. Ventilation of rooms where cooking, bathing and washing takes place helps.¹

Sources of Information

1. Pesticide Action Network UK. www.pan-uk.org
2. Mark Sydenham (1996) *Green Home Handbook*, Friends of the Earth Scotland
3. Gary A Davis & Em Turner *Safe Substitutes at Home: Non-toxic household Products*, EnviroSense, <http://es.epa.gov/techinfo/facts/safe-fs>

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