

# Policy Statement

## Changes to labelling for agricultural and veterinary (AgVet) chemicals

Under the [model Work Health and Safety \(WHS\) Regulations](#) labels for hazardous chemicals used in workplaces must contain GHS labelling elements: signal words, pictograms, and hazard statements and precautionary statements. They must also include the contact details and address of the Australian manufacturer or importer.

Some elements on AgVet chemical labels, such as first aid and safety directions, are approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) based on a health and safety risk assessment carried out by the APVMA. From 1 January 2017 the model WHS Regulations require additional GHS information on the labels of AgVet chemicals used in the workplace.

**Note:** This policy statement was updated in July 2020 to reflect Australia's transition to GHS 7.

### What do the WHS Regulations require on AgVet chemical labels?

A partial exemption from workplace chemical labelling has been provided for AgVet chemicals to recognise information already required on the labels of AgVet chemical products. The only label elements required under the model WHS Regulations for registered AgVet chemicals are GHS hazard and precautionary statements. Signal words and pictograms are not required on labels for AgVet chemicals.

Hazard statements communicate the intrinsic hazards of a chemical including their severity. Hazards can include the ability of the chemical to:

- catch fire (flammability)
- cause burns (corrosivity)
- cause poisoning (acute toxicity)
- effect the nervous system, liver, kidney or other organs (specific target organ toxicity)
- cause cancer (carcinogenicity), or
- cause allergic reactions.

Precautionary statements provide advice on the recommended measures to prevent or minimise adverse effects resulting from exposure to the hazardous chemical.

Further information about the hazards and control measures can be found in the Safety Data Sheet provided by the supplier of the hazardous chemical.

### AgVet labels were recognised under previous workplace chemical labelling laws, why is this additional information required now?

The labels of AgVet chemicals often do not specify all of the hazards that the chemical has, especially physico-chemical hazards like flammability and chronic health hazards like carcinogenicity. This information is only included in the chemical's safety data sheet.

The label is the most immediate and accessible source of information for hazardous chemicals. Including hazard and precautionary statements on the label ensures workers handling AgVet chemicals, who may not have read the safety data sheet, are provided with the same kind of information about the hazards of the chemicals as workers in other sectors.

## **Why are hazard and precautionary statements required when AgVet chemical labels already include APVMA safety directions?**

The safety directions on AgVet chemical labels primarily communicate the immediate (acute) health effects of exposure to the chemical

It is important that complete hazard and precautionary information is available to everybody who handles AgVet chemicals throughout the supply chain, including workers who manufacture, package, store, sell and dispose of the chemicals.

The APVMA risk assessment considers exposure to the chemical when used in accordance with the label instructions. It does not replace a risk assessment conducted in a workplace where the chemical may be used, handled or stored in different circumstances to those considered in the APVMA risk assessment.

## **Why don't therapeutic goods (human medicines) have to include hazard and precautionary statements?**

Therapeutic goods that are packaged for administration to humans must be labelled in accordance with the requirements of the Therapeutic Goods Administration. These products are exempt from workplace labelling requirements because:

- Therapeutic goods are designed for and tested on humans to give therapeutic effect. Any adverse effects of the goods are considered against the human health benefits they provide to the patient.
- Therapeutic goods are used by workers in much lower quantities than is the case for workplace AgVet chemicals.
- Therapeutic goods are not supplied in large volumes (e.g. 100 litre containers), whereas workplace AgVet chemicals are commonly available in these large volumes.
- Therapeutic goods are handled and packaged such that there is minimal risk of accidental exposure to workers and users.

Therapeutic goods which are in 'bulk' for manufacturing, packaging, or compounding purposes are not included in the exemption and must be labelled in accordance with the WHS requirements.

### **More information**

- [Businesses using, handling or storing AgVet chemicals - Information sheet](#)
- [Manufacturers importers AGVET chemicals - Information sheet](#)
- [Code of Practice: Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals](#)
- [Code of Practice: Preparation of safety data sheets for hazardous chemicals](#)
- [Code of Practice: Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace](#)

For more information see the [Safe Work Australia](http://www.swa.gov.au) website (www.swa.gov.au).