







Issues Online

Oct. | Nov. | Dec. | Jan.

CATEGORY[New Releases:\(139\)](#)[Automotive:\(1\)](#)[Community Affairs:\(1\)](#)[Consumer Information:\(38\)](#)[Education :\(15\)](#)[Environment and Nature:\(15\)](#)[Families and Children:\(23\)](#)[Fashion and Beauty:\(1\)](#)[Finance and Business:\(36\)](#)[Food and Nutrition:\(35\)](#)[Generation 50+:\(30\)](#)[Health and Safety:\(55\)](#)[Home and Garden:\(4\)](#)[Human Rights:\(2\)](#)[Lifestyles:\(73\)](#)[Multicultural Canada:\(5\)](#)[Personal Finance:\(40\)](#)[Special Dates:\(11\)](#)[Sports and Leisure:\(1\)](#)[Technology:\(12\)](#)[Travel and Destinations:\(11\)](#)

Articles

The discovery of a pesticide—from lab to label





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(NC)—When farmers or homeowners need to control pests like insects, diseases and weeds in their crops or on their property they often turn to pesticides. But few of us really understand how a pesticide makes it to store shelves.

It's a process that can take up to 10 years and cost hundreds of millions of dollars. According to Lorne Hepworth, president of CropLife Canada, the trade association representing the manufacturers, developers and distributors of plant science technologies, including pesticides: "Canada has one of the most stringent regulatory systems in the world. Only the products that pose no unacceptable risk to human health or the environment make it to store shelves."



Researchers look through thousands of chemicals in a laboratory to find one they think could become part of an effective pesticide. After a chemical is identified, it is tested in a lab to determine how safe it is. Once it passes through this initial safety and efficacy test, it moves onto field testing in small research plots. Here it's determined if the product will control the desired insect, weed or diseases.

If the product passes through this phase, the next few years are then dedicated to conducting the necessary tests to satisfy Canada's regulatory requirements. Health Canada requires each new product to go through about 200 separate tests to examine health and environmental impacts as well as value.

On average, only one in about 1000,000 active ingredients makes it from the lab through to commercialization. And the cost to manufacturers to get a product from the lab to stores shelves is about \$250 million.

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