

Illegal use of **FIPRONIL** as head lice remedy poses a serious health risk to children



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The illegal repackaging and sales of a fipronil containing insecticide as a dermal and oral treatment for head lice raised alarm in the northern parts of Pretoria. The Department of Health instructed their inspectorate to investigate the matter and an individual was found in possession of small hypodermic syringes filled with about 5 ml of a 200 gram per liter formulation of a fipronil insecticide. These were sold to nursery schools and primary schools in Pretoria as a head lice remedy for children.

Fipronil is an insecticide registered for the control of thrips in citrus and mangoes, diamond backed moths in certain vegetable crops and termites in veld and grazing under the Fertilizers, Farm Feeds, Agricultural Remedies and Stock Remedies Act, 1947 (Act No. 36 of 1947). It is also registered under the same Act as a stock remedy to control ticks and fleas in cats and dogs.

Fipronil is not registered as a human health care product and may therefore not be used as such. The use of this insecticide as oral drench or scalp treatment poses a very serious health risk to children – it was never intended to be used on human beings.

Act 36 of 1947 prohibits the use of agricultural and stock remedies for any other purposes or in any other manners than those prescribed on the labels of these products. This is clearly stated in Regulation No. R1716 of 26 July 1991. The Act also prohibits the sale and use of agricultural remedies in containers other than those with their original labels that are approved by the Registrar of Act 36/1947 (Regulation No. R181 of 7 February 2003). The syringes with the fipronil product that were supplied to schools are not approved containers and they also have no labels as dictated by the Act. Furthermore, selling a human medicine that is not registered under the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act, 1965 (Act No. 101 of 1965) is a contravention of Section 14 (1) of the Act 101/1965.



The person who was found in possession of the repackaged fipronil product will be charged under the relevant Sections and Regulations of the above mentioned Acts.

The industry also believes that the person should be charged with attempted murder as he has willfully sold toxic substances to be

administered orally to children. It has also come to the attention of CropLife South Africa that certain hair dressers are promoting the use of this product to their clients to control head lice. Any person who recommends the use of an agricultural remedy contrary to what the label indicates is also contravening Act 36 of 1947 and is liable to prosecution.

AVCASA appeals to the South African Police and the National Prosecuting Authority to take this case seriously and ensure an example is made of the perpetrator to prevent any further incidents of this nature taking place. We also appeal to any parents, teachers or schools that have acquired these syringes to contact us for advice on proper disposal thereof.

Should head lice be detected in children parents must consult their general practitioners or pharmacists for registered head lice treatments. No unregistered products should be considered as they may pose a health risk to children.

For Any Further Enquiries, Please Contact:

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Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, Griffon Poison Information Centre at 082-446-8946.