



Chemical training & health management for rural women

Maree Brown

Project Officer, Murrumbidgee Horticulture Council

in a nutshell

- A chemical users training course for 'all-women' groups has proven to be a resounding success
- As well as learning all aspects of chemical handling and safety; the course has been well rounded out with a component on back health and body strength

Women in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area have had the opportunity to undertake compliance training for use of chemicals on farm, followed up by learning how to look after themselves while undertaking the more physical aspects of such work.

Participants said 'they felt comfortable initiating group discussion and asking questions, with the all-women group'. The women felt actively involved. There were a number of women interested in further training, either by distance education or further face to face training in Griffith.

A pilot training day conducted at the Cottage Gallery, Griffith on 20 November, 2007 by Murrumbidgee Horticulture Council, Natural Resources Advisory Council and Farmcare Training Pty Ltd, was very successful with 15 participants achieving their Level II Chemical Compliance Certificate.

The topics covered in the course were:

- Pest Identification/Management
- Legislation
- Label reading
- Calibration of knapsack
- Record keeping/OH&S compliance
- Dangers of poisons/protective clothing
- Effects of poisons on health.

Legislation now requires anyone collecting or administering chemicals to be accredited and records kept.

Some of the women attending said 'they were unaware how easily the chemicals can enter the body and harm is done'. Also having the opportunity to calibrate their own knapsack provided a great deal of interest.

The certificate course took about six hours to complete.

Matching good farm practice with good health

Leading on from the Occupational Health and Safety issues raised during the morning session, the afternoon session focused on back health. Many of the rural women work physically within their farming enterprises, thus increasing the need to maintain good health and core body strength to prevent possible injury.

A local personal trainer spoke to the women about back injury prevention and strengthening exercises. Everyone then participated in an hour of Pilates and put their knowledge into action. Improved core body strength (stomach and back area) was the main area worked on.

Interest was expressed by many of those attending to upgrade to the Level III Chemcert Accreditation.



Figure 1. Course facilitator, Sheryl Jarecki, demonstrates procedures for safe spray preparation



Level III includes study topics on:

- Treat weeds
- Prepare & apply chemicals
- Transport, handle & store chemicals

Success of pilot leads to more courses

Due to the success of this initial training day, funding was sought and received through the Department of Education & Training for two further Level II training days on 4 March and 1 April 2008.

For those that completed the Level II training, upgrades to Level III will be offered on the 18 March and 6 May, 2008.

At the end of both Level II and Level III, participants will have completed six units towards a Certificate in Rural Production, Horticulture or Conservation & Land Management.

The training has provided a fantastic opportunity for local rural women. All training, childcare, morning tea and lunch costs are covered by Department Education & Training, Natural Resources Advisory Council and Murrumbidgee Horticulture Council. 🌿

Further information

Maree Brown

T: 02 6964 2420

E: mbrown@murrumbidgeehort.org.au



Figure 2. Participants had the opportunity to learn how to calibrate their own knapsack.



Figure 3.and to put their learning into practice!