



Health and Safety in Farming

HSNO brief for farmers – Approved handler test certificates for agrichemicals



Training and approved handler test certificates

People handling and using agrichemicals need to be trained to ensure these chemicals are managed safely. For the more hazardous agrichemicals, a minimum standard for training is required.

A person who reaches this minimum standard and who has relevant experience in handling the agrichemicals can be issued with an approved handler test certificate. A test certificate is issued by a test certifier. A test certifier is someone who is recognised as an industry expert and who has been approved by ERMA New Zealand.

When do I need an approved handler test certificate?

Whether you need to be an approved handler for agrichemicals depends on what products you use and how they are used.

Toxic agrichemicals

The most toxic agrichemicals can only be used by a person:

- who is an approved handler; or
- to whom an approved handler has provided guidance on their use and handling and an approved handler is present while the substance is being handled.

These chemicals also require tracking.

For further information, see Tracking of agrichemicals (Brief 7).

Ecotoxic agrichemicals

Agrichemicals that are ecotoxic (i.e. toxic to the environment) may require an approved handler if they are used in a wide dispersive manner, or when they are applied onto or into water.

Wide dispersive means the use of application methods (e.g. boom sprayers) in which there is the potential for the product to “drift” and cause unwanted effects on properties neighbouring the application area. These effects are commonly referred to as off-site or non-target effects.

Commercial contractors

All commercial contractors using agrichemicals requiring an approved handler **must** be an approved handler. In the case of ecotoxic products, a commercial contractor must be an approved handler, regardless of the application method (i.e. whether the product is applied in a wide dispersive manner or not).

If you employ a contractor to do work on your farm, check that they have the correct certification.

How will I know whether an approved handler is required?

Whether an approved handler is required for an agrichemical will commonly be given on the product label. If in doubt, check the safety data sheet or ask your agrichemical supplier.

Lists of commonly used farm products that require an approved handler are available from ERMA New Zealand at <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/publications/pdfs/pahtr.pdf>

How can I demonstrate I have the necessary training?

To obtain an approved handler test certificate, you must show to a test certifier that you have:

- knowledge of the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (HSNO) legislation;
- knowledge of the products that you will be handling;
- practical skills (competency) to safely handle and use the products you wish to be certified for.

The evidence for this would usually be a written record from a work supervisor or from the provider of a training course.

The most convenient way to do this is to have your supervisor and/or training provider complete the assessment forms produced by ERMA New Zealand. These can be found at <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/publications/pdfs/ER-AF-HSC-AHpack.pdf>

Where can I get training?

Practical skills training (or on-the-job training) will generally be done in the workplace. However, it can also be provided in a course that includes a practical tuition element.

Theory training needs to meet minimum standards. The training can take place in a classroom or by correspondence.

The content of both the practical and theory components required to become an approved handler are set out in the assessment forms. Before going on any training course, make sure it will cover the elements required in the assessment forms and that

your test certifier will recognise the training course. There are a number of formal training providers that can cover the theory element. Two common examples are GROWSAFE™ and FARMSAFE™.

It also pays to check with your agrichemical supplier, as some suppliers have run specific training courses for their customers.

Where do I get an approved handler test certificate?

An approved handler test certificate is issued by a test certifier.

If you are doing a formal training course, check with your trainer to see if they will arrange for your training material to be assessed by a test certifier and for an approved handler test certificate to be issued.

How do I renew my test certificate?

Approved handler test certificates last for 5 years. To renew a test certificate you will need to see a test certifier.

You will need to show the test certifier that you have kept up to date with any changes in work practices and the HSNO regulations over the last 5 years. By and large, it will be a much simpler process to renew your test certificate.

Further information

Information on training requirements and approved handler certification can be found in the New Zealand Standard NZS8409:2004; *Management of Agrichemicals*.

Approved handler assessment forms can be found at <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/resources/publications/pdfs/ER-AF-HSC-AHpack.pdf>

A list of test certifiers is available from: <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/tc.html>
To find a test certifier operating in your area, choose your **Region**, tick the **Agrichemicals** box and press **Search**.

Information is also available from the ERMA New Zealand Hazardous Substance Compliance Line phone 0800 376 234.

