

# Chemical Services Handbook

For the Safe Use of Agricultural and  
Veterinary Chemicals in the Northern Territory



<b>Document title</b>	Chemical Services Handbook: For the Safe Use of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals in the Northern Territory
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<b>Approved by</b>	Chief Plant Health Officer
<b>Date approved</b>	October 2025
<b>Document review</b>	Annually
<b>TRM number</b>	NA
<b>ISBN</b>	9780724547883
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Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1.0	22 July 2025	Daniel Whitfield-Jones	First Version

Acronyms	Full form
AGVET	Agricultural and Veterinary
APVMA	Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
Cth	Commonwealth
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
PAMA	Pest Management Authorisation
S7	Schedule 7 Dangerous Poison
SUSMP	Standard for Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons (The Poison Standard)
The Act	Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 2004
The Regulations	Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2005

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. Purpose of the Handbook	4
1.2. Scope and Applicability	4
1.3. Legal Framework and Compliance	4
<b>2. General Principles</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1. Sustainable Use of Chemicals	5
2.2. Good Neighbour Approach - Agricultural Chemical Use	6
2.3. Legislative Considerations – Individual Obligations	7
<b>3. Regulatory Requirements</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1. Licensing and Authorisation	8
3.2. Record-Keeping and Reporting	11
3.2.1. Veterinary Chemical Products	11
3.2.1.1. Veterinarian Records	11
3.2.1.2. Non-Veterinarians Using Veterinary Chemical Products	11
3.2.2. Aerial and Ground Business Licensees	12
3.3. Form and Maintenance of Records	13
3.3.1. Form of Records	13
3.3.2. Prohibition of Altering Records	13
<b>4. Storage and Disposal</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1. Secure Storage Facilities	13
4.2. Correct Labelling and Inventory Management	13
4.3. Safe Disposal Practices	13
4.4. Dealing with Contaminated Containers	13
<b>5. Environmental Protection</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1. Avoid Contamination of the Environment	14
5.2. Managing Spray Drift	14
<b>6. Monitoring and Enforcement</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Review and Update of the Handbook</b>	<b>17</b>
7.1. Periodic Review Process	17
7.2. Incorporating New Findings and Practices	17
7.3. Stakeholder Consultation	17
<b>8. Useful Resources</b>	<b>18</b>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Purpose of the Handbook

Agricultural and veterinary chemicals serve as crucial tools in modern farming practices, significantly contributing to the production of agricultural and animal products. However, the misuse of chemicals can pose a significant risk to human health, animals, crops, the environment and potentially create trade issues. This handbook aims to provide practical guidance for the safe, responsible, and effective use of these chemicals, ensuring that the health of the community, workers, and the environment is protected.

## 1.2. Scope and Applicability

The handbook is designed for all individuals and entities involved in the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in the Northern Territory (NT). While it primarily focuses on agricultural use, the principles and guidelines outlined are also applicable to the wider community. This is because the handbook addresses key aspects of occupational and environmental health related to chemical use. Users of these chemicals can use this handbook to minimise risks such as spray drift damage to neighbouring properties or ecosystems.

## 1.3. Legal Framework and Compliance

The use and management of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in the NT are regulated under the "*Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 2004*" (the Act) and the "*Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations*" (the Regulations).

The handbook integrates and reflects the statutory obligations set out in the Act. Users of agricultural and veterinary chemicals must familiarise themselves with and adhere strictly to both the Act and the Regulations. This handbook aims to translate the legal requirements into practical guidelines, simplifying compliance for users.

It is important to note that while this handbook provides detailed guidelines based on the Act, it is not a substitute for the Act itself. Users are encouraged to consult the Act for comprehensive legal requirements, alternatively users can contact the Chemical Services team for further advice and guidance.

The handbook's role is to facilitate compliance and promote best practices in the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals, aligning with the overarching goal of the Act to ensure sustainable agriculture, environmental protection, and public health and safety.

## 2. General Principles

### 2.1. Sustainable Use of Chemicals

Selecting appropriate chemicals for specific agricultural purposes is vital, especially considering their environmental footprint. Implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies is a key aspect of this. IPM combines diverse management techniques with careful chemical usage, aiming for sustainable pesticide application while minimising ecological harm.

Integrating IPM in agricultural chemical application involves a strategic balance in pest control, where chemical methods are used thoughtfully within a broader strategy. This approach is geared towards effective pest management with minimal negative impacts on the environment, human health, and non-target species. Key components of this integration include:

**Monitoring and Pest Identification:** Regular observation of pest levels and precise identification are essential. This determines the need for pest control and assists in choosing the most appropriate and least harmful methods.

**Threshold Determination:** Setting thresholds at which pest levels or environmental conditions necessitate action, this prevents unnecessary chemical use.

**Preventive Agricultural Practices:** Modifying farming practices to deter pests, such as crop rotation, choosing pest-resistant crops, and irrigation management to avoid pest-friendly environments.

**Biological Control Measures:** Utilising natural predators or parasites to control pests before using chemicals. This reduces dependency on pesticides and maintains ecological balance.

**Selective Chemical Use:** When necessary, choosing pesticides that are least harmful yet effective, prioritising target-specific and low-risk options.

**Targeted and Responsible Application:** Applying chemicals in a manner that effectively targets pests while reducing exposure to non-target organisms, using precise timing and application techniques.

**Ongoing Evaluation and Adjustment:** Continuously assessing the effectiveness of pest control measures and adjusting strategies accordingly for improved pest management over time.

## 2.2. Good Neighbour Approach - Agricultural Chemical Use

The 'Good Neighbour Approach' emphasises proactive communication with neighbouring properties prior to the application of agricultural chemicals. This is designed to foster community relations, prevent potential disputes, and ensure safety and environmental stewardship. The following outlines the key requirements:

- **Notification Requirements:**
  - **Advance Notice:** It is mandatory for agricultural chemical users to inform their neighbours well in advance of any planned chemical spraying or baiting activities. The notice period should be sufficient to allow neighbours to take necessary precautions, which is at least 48 hours prior to spraying or one week prior to laying baits.
  - **Method of Communication:** Effective communication methods include written notices, emails, or direct verbal communication. This should ensure clarity and leave a record of the notification.
- **Information to be Shared:**
  - **Type of Chemicals:** Clearly specify the types of chemicals to be used, including their names and any known risks / issues associated with them.
  - **Purpose of Application:** Explain the reason for spraying, such as targeting specific pests or diseases.
  - **Expected Date and Time:** Provide the precise timing of the chemical application, including the date and likely time or timespan of spraying.
  - **Safety Measures:** Inform about any safety measures that the neighbours should take, such as staying indoors, protecting water sources, or covering certain plants.
- **Response to Concerns:**
  - **Open Dialogue:** Maintain an open channel for neighbours to express any concerns or ask questions about the spraying. This can help in addressing any issues proactively.
  - **Adjustments if Necessary:** Be prepared to adjust plans based on valid concerns raised by neighbours, such as shifting the time of spraying to accommodate special events or sensitive periods.
- **Documentation:**
  - **Record Keeping:** Keep a log of all communications for accountability. This should include who was notified, the method and date of notification, and any responses received.
- **Follow-Up:**
  - **Post-Spray Communication:** After spraying, a follow-up conversation may be necessary, especially if there were specific concerns or incidents. This helps in maintaining trust and good relations. Any post-application communication should also be documented accordingly.

## 2.3. Legislative Considerations – Individual Obligations

Following agricultural chemical legislation, regulations and legal instruments are crucial for ongoing sustainability. Users must ensure that the chemical products being used are registered with the APVMA, that they read the label directions and follow any warnings and/or exclusions. Furthermore, under NT legislation, users should be aware of other individual requirements:

**General Responsibilities (Section 13):** Users of chemicals, fertilisers, or stock foods must take adequate steps to prevent harm to public and animal health, the environment, or agricultural trade.

**Label Adherence (Sections 15 and 16):** Usage of chemical products in contradiction to label instructions is prohibited, including specific rules regarding veterinary chemicals by veterinarians and their teams. Users must also read the label every time prior to use.

**Management of Chemically Treated Animals (Section 28):** Buyers of animals for food production must observe specified withholding periods before these animals are processed for consumption.

**Utilisation of Registered Products (Section 35):** Usage of unregistered chemical products is prohibited unless authorised by permit or exemption.

**Guidelines on Contaminated Land (Section 79):** In cases of agricultural production on contaminated land, growers may be instructed by the Minister to undertake measures for reducing substance concentration in the produce, which might include product destruction or land access restrictions.

## 3. Regulatory Requirements

### 3.1. Licensing and Authorisation

#### Pilot (Chemical Rating) Licence:

- Granted in accordance with Section 63(5) of the *Act* and Section 21 of the *Regulations*.
- Applicant must hold a current, commercial pilot's licence and agricultural rating or endorsement.
- In accordance with Section 5 of the *Regulations*, the applicant must have completed and hold a current Aviation SpraySafe certificate.
- Pilots must work under the authority of a licensed aerial spray business and use registered agricultural chemicals according to their permit or label directions for aerial applications.
- Pilots must also hold a valid Schedule 7 authorisation for the possession and use of Dangerous Poisons.
- Pilots must notify the Chemicals Coordinator of any change of address within 7 days.
- Chemical ratings are valid for 3 years from date of issue.
- Section 60 of the *Act* provides an offence provision for pilots who conduct aerial spraying activities without a chemical rating or contrary to conditions of their licence.

#### Aerial Spraying Business Licence:

- Granted in accordance with Section 63(4) of the *Act* and Section 20 of the *Regulations*.
- Business must hold an Air Operator's Certificate under Part 137 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 (Cth) authorising the applicant to conduct aerial agricultural operations.
- Businesses, including owner-operators, must only employ Pilots with valid Chemical Ratings to undertake agricultural spraying activities.
- Aerial Spraying Business Licences are valid for 3 years from date of issue.
- Section 59 of the *Act* provides an offence provision for businesses who conduct aerial spraying activities without a licence or contrary to conditions of their licence.

#### Professional Ground Spray Applicator Licence:

- Granted in accordance with Section 63(3) of the *Act* and Section 19 of the *Regulations*.
- Section 5 of the *Regulations*, the applicant must have completed and hold the following competencies:
  - Horticultural licence AHCCHM303 (Prepare and Apply Chemicals), AHCCHM304 (Transport, Handle and Store Chemicals) and AHCPMG201 (Treat Weeds).
  - General Horticultural licence AHCCHM303 (Prepare and Apply Chemicals), AHCCHM304 (Transport, Handle and Store Chemicals), AHCPMG201 (Treat Weeds) and AHCPMG202 (Treat Plant Pests, Diseases and Disorders).

- Spray Applicator Licences are valid for 3 years from date of issue.
- Section 58 of the *Act* provides an offence provision for persons who conduct spraying activities without a licence or contrary to conditions of their licence.

#### **Professional Ground Spraying Business License:**

- Granted in accordance with Section 63(3) of the *Act*.
- Necessary for businesses providing ground spraying services for a fee or reward.
- All businesses, including owner-operators, must have a business license and can only employ licensed professional ground spraying applicators.
- Ground Spraying Business Licences are valid for 3 years from date of issue.
- Section 57 of the *Act* provides an offence provision for persons who conduct spraying business for fee and reward without a licence or contrary to conditions of their licence.

#### **Schedule 7 Dangerous Poisons and Restricted Chemical Products (RCP) Authorisation:**

- Individual Schedule 7 authorisations are issued for each dangerous poison.
- Schedule 7 authorisations are issued to individuals only.
- In accordance with Section 5 of the *Regulations*, users must have completed and hold the following competencies:
  - Prepare and Apply Chemicals to Control Pest Weeds and Diseases (AHCCHM307) and
  - Transport and Store Chemicals (AHCCHM304).
- Schedule 7 authorisations are valid for 2 years from date of issue.
- Sections 48 and 49 *Act*, provides offence provisions for individuals who possess or use Schedule 7 dangerous poisons or restricted chemical products without authorisation.
- Must comply with the directions of use on the label and any other directions issued by the Chemical Coordinator.

#### **Bait Injectors - Pest Animal Management (1080):**

- Bait Injecting Authorisations are issued to individuals for Sodium Fluroacetate (1080) bait preparation activities, this includes contractors and landowner / operators.
- Does not include self-contained systems or commercially prepared baits.
- In accordance with Section 5 of the *Regulations*, users must have completed and hold the following competencies:
  - Prepare and Apply Chemicals to Control Pest Weeds and Diseases (AHCCHM307),
  - Transport and Store Chemicals (AHCCHM304), and
  - Apply poison baits for vertebrate pest control in rural and environmental landscapes (AHCPMG312, or AHCPMG309).

- A personalised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for preparing wet meat baits must be completed.
- Must comply with the directions of use on the label and any other directions issued by the Chemical Coordinator.

#### **Pest Animal Management (1080, PAPP and other restricted Pest Control Products):**

- Pest Animal Management Authorisations (PAMA) are issued for each specific restricted chemical product (RCP) for the purpose of pest management activities.
- PAMA are issued to individuals and must specify the property details involved.
- Permit holders do not need to have completed specific chemical training however, any person that helps to assist bait preparation or deploy baits must have completed the below chemical training or operate under the direct supervision of someone who has the necessary competencies (see below).
- In accordance Section 5 of the *Regulations*, users must have completed and hold the following competencies:
  - Prepare and Apply Chemicals to Control Pest Weeds and Diseases (AHCCHM307),
  - Transport and Store Chemicals (AHCCHM304), and
  - Apply poison baits for vertebrate pest control in rural and environmental landscapes (AHCPMG312, or AHCPMG309).
- PAMA holders must maintain an up-to-date baiting plan and map for each property listed on your PAMA and Permit, detailing baiting schedules, coordination with neighbours, additional control methods (if required), and a long-term control strategy.
  - The map must mark dwellings, community areas, roadside stops, public access points, baiting signs, water sources/points, baiting zones, and distribution paths.
- PAMA holders must notify adjacent properties and community areas about baiting activities at least a week in advance, using an appropriate notification method.
- Authorisation holders must comply any other directions issued by the Chemical Coordinator.

## 3.2. Record-Keeping and Reporting

### 3.2.1. Veterinary Chemical Products

#### 3.2.1.1. Veterinarian Records

Veterinarians are required to maintain comprehensive records concerning the usage, prescription, recommendation, and supply of veterinary chemical products. In accordance with Section 41 of the Act, veterinarians must record the following details:

- **Owner's Name:** Write down the name of the animal's owner.
- **Date:** Note the date when the product was used, prescribed, recommended, or supplied.
- **Product Name:** Record the name of the veterinary product used or given.
- **Product Details:** Detail the form (like tablet, liquid) and concentration of the product used, prescribed, recommended, or supplied.
- **Usage:** If the product was used by the veterinarian, note the quantity used and the method of application.
- **Prescription:** If the product was prescribed, recommended, or supplied, specify the quantity prescribed, recommended, or supplied.
- **Withholding Period:** Document the time that must pass before the animal's products (like milk, meat) are safe for human consumption.
- **Sufficient information to identify the animal in relation to which the veterinarian used the product or prescribed, recommended, or supplied the product for use.**

Records must be kept for 2 years after use and be presented for inspection on request by a chemical advisor.

#### 3.2.1.2. Non-Veterinarians Using Veterinary Chemical Products

Individuals who are not veterinarians but use registered veterinary chemical products (including under prescription) for treating animals of food-producing species must also adhere to specific record-keeping standards. In accordance with Section 14 of the *Regulations*, records must include the following:

- The product name or the chemical/common name of its active constituent
- Product expiry date (if applicable)
- The dates and times of administration
- The administered dose amount
- The administration route
- The withholding period associated with the product
- Identification methods for the treated animal(s).

These records must be maintained for a period of two years following the product's use.

### 3.2.2. Aerial and Ground Business Licensees

In accordance with Section 72 of the Act, aerial and ground spraying licence holders must keep records of each agricultural chemical application. In order to comply with Section 11 and 12 of the *Regulations*, records must include the following:

#### **General Requirements (All Licence Holders):**

- Product expiry date (if applicable)
- Dates and times of application, including start and finish times
- Location details where the product was applied, with specifics to identify exact areas or paddocks and their sizes
- Type of crops or plants in the treated area
- Weather conditions at the time of application, including temperature, wind direction, and speed
- Target pest name
- Withholding period
- Permit or authorization details for the product use
- Any additional information mandated by the permit or authorization.

#### **Ground Spray Business & Applicators:**

In addition to the general requirements above, ground spraying business licence holders and ground spray applicators must also record:

- the names and addresses of the individual/s applying the product
- the business
- client details for whom the product was applied
- Document the full name and Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) registration number of the product used and
- Application Specifications including the rate and amount of product applied, including the method of application.

#### **Aerial Spraying Requirement:**

In addition to the general requirements above, aerial spraying business licence holders and Pilots must also record:

- Pilot's name and address
- Aircraft type and registration mark
- Detailed description of the application method and equipment used

## 3.3. Form and Maintenance of Records

### 3.3.1. Form of Records

All spray records are required by Section 120 of Act to be kept in a form that is readily accessible and can be produced on request by a Chemical Advisor. This includes handwritten records and electronic copies; while there is no specified template, the records must include the required details as previously mentioned.

### 3.3.2. Prohibition of Altering Records

It is strictly prohibited to alter or falsify records that are required by the kept and maintained by the Act. Section 121 of the Act provides an offence provision for individuals who alter records or falsify or make misleading entries.

## 4. Storage and Disposal

### 4.1. Secure Storage Facilities

Schedule 7 dangerous poisons and restricted chemical product users must secure these products to prevent unauthorised access and environmental contamination. This must include all the following:

- ensuring safe design, location and installation of storage and handling systems (e.g. racking systems, tanks, separate rooms, or buildings)
- separate incompatible substances to prevent reactive chemicals interacting
- control potential ignition sources around flammable substances
- have appropriate safety signage and placards
- be prepared for spill containment and have clean up systems with necessary capacity
- have emergency plans in place to deal with an incident involving the hazardous chemicals
- have the appropriate PPE and store it correctly (e.g. respirators sealed)
- have fire-fighting equipment that is easily accessible.

### 4.2. Correct Labelling and Inventory Management

Containers must be accurately labelled, and an up-to-date inventory should be maintained, this includes a Material Safety Data Sheet is provided for each hazardous chemical in the storage area.

### 4.3. Safe Disposal Practices

Users must dispose of chemical waste responsibly, ensuring no harm to public health or the environment. This includes adhering to disposal guidelines specified on the approved labels, permit or as directed by a Chemical Advisor, in accordance with Section 21 of the Act.

### 4.4. Dealing with Contaminated Containers

Containers that have held chemicals must not be reused for any other purpose unless:

- They are part of an approved recycling program, or

- All traces of the chemical product have been removed, the container is reused for containing a chemical product, and it is suitably relabelled.
- Approved recycling programs include:
  - DrumMuster - [Drummuster](#) - 1800 008 707
  - ChemClear - [Home - ChemClear](#) - 1800 008 182 or call on (02) 6230 6712.
  - Veolia - <https://www.veolia.com/anz/our-facilities/treatment-plants/liquid-hazardous-waste/darwin-depot-nt>

## 5. Environmental Protection

### 5.1. Avoid Contamination of the Environment

Users must make take all reasonable steps to ensure that the use of chemicals does not harm the environment, the health of animals or harms the health of the general public. In order to achieve this, users must:

- Ensuring each spray nozzle is equipped with a leak-proof, cut-off valve in accordance with Section 7 of the *Regulations*.
- Selectively apply chemicals, only using those necessary for the intended control and in a manner that minimises off-target movement.

### 5.2. Managing Spray Drift

Effective management of spray drift is crucial to prevent off-target chemical application, therefore the following practices should be observed:

- Utilise only serviceable equipment and use techniques that minimise drift.
- Section 7 of the *Regulations*, requires that aerial spray operations **must** have the following:
  - a smoke generating device is operated at ground level at or near the point at which the agricultural chemical product is applied immediately before, and at all times during, the application.
  - the aircraft is fitted with a smoke generating device that is operated immediately before, and at all times during, the application of the agricultural chemical product.
  - a windsock that is clearly visible to the pilot of the aircraft is operating at ground level at or near the point at which the agricultural chemical product is applied.
- Ground and aerial applicators must monitor and adjust to weather conditions to prevent drift into unintended areas, especially sensitive ecosystems and water bodies.
- If any unintended spray drift occurs, the applicator must contact the Chemical Services team and advise them asap. If spray drift occurs into a neighbouring property, the applicator must advise the affected property as well, and document the communication and response(s).

#### 5.3. Managing Chemical Residues

Agricultural and veterinary chemical products break down over time after they have been applied, but some residues do remain on crops in animals.

Chemicals that may be detected as residues include:

- antibiotics used to control bacterial diseases in animals
- anthelmintics used to control internal parasites in animals
- fungicides used to control fungal diseases in plants and plant products
- insecticides used to control insect pests in crops, protect stored grain and control external parasites on animals
- herbicides used to control weeds in crops
- fumigants used to protect grain and sterilise soil, sheds and bee hives
- hormonal growth promotants used as veterinary medicines or to improve growth in livestock.

To avoid residues, you must follow all the following practices:

- only use a chemical for the crop listed on the label or permit
- only use it at the concentration and rate recommended on the label or permit
- do not use it more often than stated on the label or permit
- only harvest produce after the stated withholding period has passed.

## 6. Monitoring and Enforcement

### **Directions by Chemicals Coordinator (Section 87):**

- The Chemicals Coordinator can issue written directions to prevent or address offences, protect public health, the environment, and trade interests. Non-compliance can result in penalties of up to 200 units for individuals or 1,000 units for corporations.

### **Entry and Inspection of Premises (Sections 94-95):**

- Chemical advisers have the authority to enter premises (excluding residential properties without consent) to inspect, examine, and take samples. They can also issue directives regarding the use or storage of substances, use of equipment and inspect and remove chemicals, equipment, documents and records.

### **Seizure of Substances and Things (Section 96):**

- If there are reasonable grounds to believe a substance is connected with an offence or poses a health or safety threat, Chemical Advisors can seize it. Non-compliance with seizure conditions or obstructing Chemical Advisors can lead to substantial penalties.

### **Retention and Disposal of Seized Items (Section 97):**

- Items seized due to their connection with an offence must be held for evidence or disposed of if posing a health threat.
- The court may order destruction, forfeiture or compensation following a verdict.

### **Powers in Relation to Food-Producing Species (Section 98):**

- Chemical Advisors have additional powers concerning animals of food-producing species to enforce compliance with the Act.

### **Investigation of Complaints (Section 99):**

- The Chemicals Coordinator is responsible for investigating complaints related to chemical product use. The Chemical Coordinator is also responsible for advising the complainant of the investigation's progress and outcome, and they must ensure that they do so without revealing sensitive or personal information.

### **Requirement to Provide Name and Address (Section 100):**

- Chemical Advisors can require individuals suspected of offences to provide their name and address, with penalties for non-compliance.

### **Obstruction and False Statements (Sections 101-102):**

- It is an offence to obstruct Chemical Advisors or provide false or misleading information during investigation or enforcement activities.

## 7. Review and Update of the Handbook

Ensuring this handbook remains current, relevant and effective in promoting safe, responsible, and sustainable use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals is imperative. This section identifies the systematic approach for the periodic review, integration of contemporary scientific and technological advances, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

### 7.1. Periodic Review Process

- **Frequency and Schedule:** The handbook shall be subject to a formal review every **five** years. An interim review may be conducted in response to significant regulatory changes, major technological breakthroughs, emergent health and environmental concerns, or specific advice from APVMA.
- **Review Methodology:** The process will involve an assessment of the handbook's effectiveness in meeting its objectives, an evaluation of compliance rates and enforcement challenges, and the identification of new risks and opportunities within the sector.
- **Outcome Reporting:** The Chemical Services unit will produce a report summarising the findings of the review, with recommendations for amendments or updates. This report will be made publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability.

### 7.2. Incorporating New Findings and Practices

- **Continuous Monitoring:** The Chemical Services unit will work with the APVMA and industry to monitor ongoing research and technological developments relevant to agricultural and veterinary chemicals, focusing on advancements that offer improved safety, efficiency, or environmental sustainability.

### 7.3. Stakeholder Consultation

- **Diverse Participation:** Consideration will be made to engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including small and large-scale users, industry representatives, regulatory authorities, academic and research institutions, environmental and public health groups.
- **Consultation Platforms:** A variety of platforms can be used for consultation, including public forums, online surveys, targeted workshops, and expert panels, to gather a wide range of perspectives and expertise if required.
- **Feedback Integration:** Stakeholder feedback will be systematically collected, analysed, and incorporated into the review process. Chemical Services will provide rationales for decisions made, especially in cases where conflicting feedback is received, to ensure transparency and build trust among stakeholders.

## 8. Useful Resources

### Further Information

For detailed information on registered agricultural and veterinary chemical products, permits, and label approvals, visit the **Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)** website. The APVMA's **PUBCRIS** database provides free public access to current product registrations, active constituents, approved labels, and permit details.

For more information, please see the relevant links:

[Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority](https://www.apvma.gov.au) - <https://www.apvma.gov.au>

[Public Chemical Registration Information System Search](portal.apvma.gov.au) - <portal.apvma.gov.au>

### Contact – NT Department of Agriculture and Fisheries

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