Illegal Sale Of Pesticides Targeted

BY MIKE HASTEN
Advertiser State Editor

BATON ROUGE — The state Department of Agriculture is cracking down on the illegal sale of pesticides that has resulted in the death of one child and the poisoning of several others.

Agricultural Commissioner Bob Odom yesterday announced a statewide effort to break up what appears to be a network of illegal sales outlets.

The crackdown began this month after authorities discovered that a Baton Rouge man was selling the pesticide methyl parathion, which is intended for outdoor use only.

The brown liquid was being sold in Dr. Pepper bottles to be used as roach poison.

One Death

The Department of Agriculture was alerted to the problem when a six-year-old boy was poisoned Aug. 31. The boy’s father, Allen Chaney, said he purchased the poison from Paul Wright of Baton Rouge and intended to spread it in his house to kill roaches.

Chaney said he set the bottle inside his pickup truck, turned to pay Wright and returned to find that his son had drunk some of the poison from the soft drink bottle.

Investigators went to Wright’s house and obtained another bottle of the poison. He was later arrested and charged with negligent injury and Odom says other charges of illegally selling pesticides will be filed.

Six children have been poisoned in similar instances around the state, Odom said, and one child has died.

Three cases of poisoning have been reported in Batoun Rouge, one in Covington, one in Monroe area and one in Bogalusa.

Wright said he purchased the poison from a man in Mississippi, which has led state officials to suspect the same Mississippi supplier is distributing the poison in other parts of the state.

The Department of Agriculture is working with Baton Rouge City Police, the Poison Control Center and Mississippi authorities to try to break up the ring.

“Total Disregard”

“Whoever is doing this has a total disregard for people’s lives and safety,” Odom said. “We’re trying to get civil and criminal charges — such as negligent homicide. We will do everything that is physically possible to get it off the market.”

Odom said pesticides should be purchased only from authorized dealers and care should be taken with all poisons. The methyl parathion found in Baton Rouge and other cities is intended to be used on cotton and soybean crops.

“Sure, it’ll kill his roaches,” Odom said. “But it’ll kill his kids, too.”