

DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT CHEMICAL USE – A FOUR CORNER DEBATE

Objective: Decrease the likelihood of negative effect from chemical exposure.

Concept: The use of chemicals in today's society is often controversial. Each person must develop his/her own philosophy and tolerance level about the use of chemicals. Controversial topics can be a favorite of adolescents. When controversial topics such as chemical use in today's society are put into a structured format it allows adolescents to think through their own thoughts and develop reasoning skills to defend their position. Along with increased knowledge come these skills:

- ▶ Increase in social skills
- ▶ Ability to listen respectfully to different opinions
- ▶ Ability to debate effectively
- ▶ Ability to look at a theme from different perspectives which improves tolerance and ability to make responsible decisions
- ▶ Shy students will be able to take an active role in a discussion by using prepared arguments

Targeted Age: Adolescence

Materials:

- ▶ 4 posters, each labeled with one of the following: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree
- ▶ Paper and writing utensils

Tape each of the four posters in a different corner of the room. Select a statement from those listed below or make up another one that is appropriate to your audience and lesson. The opinion statements are purposely biased and some may be negatively stated.

- ▶ Parents can prevent poisoning among their children by locking up all hazardous material away from small children.
- ▶ Wearing personal protective clothing while applying chemicals can be more dangerous than not wearing them because of its discomfort and inconvenience.
- ▶ Regulations should be less restrictive in regard to application of farm chemicals.
- ▶ Regulations involving chemical use on the farm should be increased to ensure the safety of the total population.
- ▶ Farmers should be encouraged to only use organic methods.

Debate:

Read the statement to the group. Give the group a couple minutes to determine how they feel about the statement. Direct each person to go to the statement corner that is closest to their opinion. As a subgroup, take five minutes to discuss the reasons for their choice of answer. Instruct them to use facts to defend their choice. Each group will appoint a spokesperson for the group and share the reasons for their choice. At this point some participants may have changed their mind. Have them switch to another corner if they chose to do so. Provide another three minutes for discussion with the new group. As a group, compile a list of the four top reasons for supporting the statement as they did.

