

Community Messages on Desert Locusts

About Desert Locusts

- The Desert Locust is considered the most destructive migratory pest in the world
- A Desert Locust **lives for about 3 months**:
 - 2 weeks for eggs to hatch
 - 6 weeks for hoppers to become adults
 - 4 weeks for adults to become mature and lay eggs
- **Immature swarms** fly the farthest and are the most destructive locust stage.
- Swarms **fly** during the day and move in the same direction of the wind. They can travel as far as 150 km in a day.
- **Swarm sizes** can range from under 1 km² to several hundred km². There can be from 40 million to 80 million locust adults in each square km of a swarm.
- Desert Locusts target **crops and vegetation** used as pasture by pastoralists' herds.
- **Locusts do not attack people or animals**. There is no evidence to suggest that they carry diseases that could harm humans.
- They can **eat their own weight** in a day (2 grams)

What is being done?

- The Ministry of Agriculture, with FAO support, is conducting **locust control operations** to help you protect and preserve your crops and animals.
- Spraying the swarms is currently the only viable method of **control**.
- Locust control staff is **well-trained** to carry out these operations to avoid adverse effects and limit the negative impact on human health and the environment.
- FAO is supporting countries in implementing **locust prevention and adequate locust control operations** that respect human health and the environment.
- FAO encourages **only properly trained and equipped teams** to undertake control operations against Desert Locusts.
- Ground and aerial control operations always abide by **appropriate safety measures**, including the use of protective clothing and masks and correct application set of rules.
- If conventional chemical insecticides are used, you should take precautions to **minimize harmful effects** on human health and the environment.

Safety measures associated to locust control operations

- National, regional and local authorities **inform communities in advance** regarding control locations and precautions they should take.
- **Follow instructions** provided by locust control staff or agricultural extension agents if you are a bystander, a farmer, a livestock owner, a beekeeper.
- **Contact local authorities** as soon as you see Desert Locusts. They can be bright pink or yellow adults, or black/yellow wingless hoppers.
Contact (insert appropriate contact information)

Before spraying

- If instructed by the survey or control team or the local authorities, cover wells or **drinking water points** in the village or close to the house with a tarpaulin.

- Remove **beehives** from the fields that will be treated, especially if plants are flowering. Generally, 3 to 5 km is a safe distance. You should wait at least one week before you return your honeybees to the treated fields.

During spraying

- During and immediately after spraying, **do not** approach the fields that are being treated.
- If your field is treated with pesticides, you should wait for **at least 48 hours** before you can **harvest the crop**. This is called the **pre-harvest interval**. If you respect the pre-harvest interval, pesticide residues on the crop will not pose a risk for consumers.
- If your **livestock** grazes in or close to pastures treated with insecticides, you should wait for a minimum number of days **at least 48 hours** before you can let the animals re-enter the treated plots. This is called the **withholding period**. If you respect the withholding period, pesticide residues on the grass will not pose a risk to your livestock or for consumers who are drinking milk or eating meat from your animals.

After spraying

- Respect **pre-harvest intervals and withholding periods** – the minimum period of time that must elapse between the last pesticide application and access to the treated area.
- Keep you and your family safe from pesticide exposure. **Do not** enter the sprayed fields for at least 48 hours after spraying.
- **Do not** collect, eat or sell locusts found near or around the pesticide application areas. They could contain traces of pesticide and this is harmful for your health!
- Children SHOULD NOT touch or play with dead locusts.
- **Do not** reuse empty pesticide containers to store food or water! Eating or drinking anything from these containers can pose serious health risks. Pesticide residues will always be present in the container, even after cleaning them.

If exposed to pesticides

- If your eyes, hands or any other body part have been in contact with pesticides, **wash immediately** with a lot of clean water.
- If you have migraines or nausea, visit the **nearest health center** as soon as possible.
- If you find **empty pesticide containers** close to your field or house, return them to the local Ministry of Agriculture office, to be properly disposed.

Advice for farmers

- Dig trenches around your crops and bury the hoppers to stop them from entering your field. It is important that farmers and pastoralists immediately inform local officials or national authorities whenever they see locusts, indicating the colour and if they are adults or hoppers. *Contact (insert appropriate contact information)*
- Farmers should not attempt to use chemical pesticides because these can be dangerous and expensive.
- Beating pots and pans, dancing, blowing whistles, shooting bullets or tear gas, and lighting smoky fires can be common response, but do not kill any Desert Locust. They simply scare them away to neighbouring areas. This can have a negative effect when teams are trying to treat locusts that are settled.