

IPM Heresies – What is true for you
Glen Koehler
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Pest Management Office
491 College Avenue, Orono, ME 04473
Tel: 207-581-3882
Email: gkoehler@umext.maine.edu

Integrated pest management (IPM) by definition encompasses every aspect of tending an orchard. The intent is to bring a multifaceted, systematic approach to whole orchard management picture. The point is to consider interactions and secondary effects of each action taken, and to make decisions that optimize your goals in running the orchard. This presentation will focus on “classic IPM” as a set of decision tools to determine if, when, and where insect and disease pest suppression is needed, and the selection of a strategy and mix of tactics to provide cost effective, environmentally sound results when treatment is needed.

Different people place different emphasis on different goals, and have different approaches to reaching those goals. Added to that are differences between orchards in rootstock, cultivar, orchard size, site characteristics, size, work force, equipment, finances, pest pressure, wholesale vs. retail vs. pick your own, different types of customers etc. As a result, IPM like other aspects of each orchard business is unique to each situation.

This variability complicates efforts to standardize IPM for use as a marketing tool, to document food safety, and measure progress in reducing environmental and human risks associated with pesticides. There is a set of recommended practices promoted by Extension IPM Programs, based on what are perceived to be preferred options for maximizing benefit from cultural and biological controls; optimizing the timing, selection and application of pesticide; and minimizing potential for potential for negative impacts.

Nature, science, and orchard management are full of nuance, ambiguity, circumstance and complexity. The word heresy comes from the Greek word for “able to choose”, and is applied to those persons who do not conform to orthodoxy, which is the “established opinion of scholars”. Orthodoxy comes from the Greek words for “having the right opinion.”

If IPM decisions could be reduced to black and white rules, the right choices would be self-evident and we wouldn’t bother talking about them. But management decisions are often judgment calls, and the “truth” is often a matter of opinion. By necessity, apple growers are IPM heretics to one degree or another. Growers have to sort through a variety of recommended practices, some practical, some not, and choose which IPM decision tools and pest suppression methods make sense for their situation. Which practices are likely to justify the time and other costs they require in return for equal or better crop value, lower risk, or lower pesticide costs? How do you prioritize and choose among different pesticides for characteristics like worker safety, conservation of beneficial species, or minimal environmental impact?

This presentation will review general observations about apple pest priorities and use of IPM practices, followed by interaction with the audience about the benefits and costs for a list of specific IPM pest monitoring methods, management practices, and pesticide selection criteria. Growers will be able to create a personal scorecard for defining their own right opinions for choosing among IPM options.