

## Citronella

The EPA estimates 10,000 – 20,000 physician-diagnosed pesticide poisonings occur each year. Although pesticides help deter pest transmitted disease, they also carry a risk to our health. As with most things, the push for natural or clean alternatives is prevalent. As a plant derived, natural pest repellent citronella is considered one of those alternatives. Oil of Citronella was registered in the US in 1948 and consists of mainly citronellol, citronellal, and geraniol. Pure citronella can be mildly irritating to the skin and may cause throat irritation if swallowed/inhaled. Unlike mainstream pesticides, oil of citronella does not alter or damage genes.

As with any pesticide, it is important to follow the manufacturer's guidelines when using products containing citronella. Citronella can be found in lotions, sprays, wipes, candles and lamp oils. The oil of citronella is relatively harmless but the same cannot be said for the non active ingredients of the citronella based product. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are associated with a large amount of these non-active ingredients. In the case of wipes or lotions you might typically find an alcohol additive that is vaporized after application. When used in spray form, the product may contain additives for propelling citronella into the air such as butane or isobutane. Candle and oil forms containing the natural repellent can off gas formaldehyde, benzenes, xylenes, and unknown VOCs as part of fragrance mixtures.

Storage of the citronella product will have an impact on your indoor air quality as well. Off gassing occurs while waiting for the next use. When possible store the citronella based product in an air tight container. Storage in an unattached building is best if you do not have an air tight container.

For additional information on Oil of Citronella and its use, visit any of the sites below:

<http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/household/brands?tbl=chem&id=1676&query=citronella&searchas=TblChemicals>

<http://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/household/brands?tbl=chem&id=2886&query=citronella&searchas=TblChemicals>

<http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/citronellagen.html>

[http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/chem\\_search/reg\\_actions/registration/fs\\_PC-021901\\_01-Nov-99.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/chem_search/reg_actions/registration/fs_PC-021901_01-Nov-99.pdf)

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