Appendix C. Risk Quotient (RQ) Method and Levels of Concern (LOCs)

The Risk Quotient Method is the means used by the Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP), Environmental Fate and Effects Division (EFED) to integrate the results of exposure and ecotoxicity data. For this method, Risk Quotients (RQs) are calculated by dividing exposure estimates by the acute and chronic ecotoxicity values (i.e., RQ = EXPOSURE/TOXICITY). These RQs are then compared to OPP's levels of concern (LOCs). These LOCs are criteria used by OPP to indicate potential risk to non-target organisms and the need to consider regulatory action. EFED has defined LOCs for acute risk, potential restricted use classification, and for endangered species.

The criteria indicate that a pesticide used as directed has the potential to cause adverse effects on non-target organisms. LOCs currently address the following risk presumption categories:

(1) **Acute** - there is a potential for acute risk; regulatory action may be warranted in addition to restricted use classification;

(2) **Acute restricted use** - the potential for acute risk is high, but this may be mitigated through restricted use classification;

(3) **Acute endangered species** - the potential for acute risk to endangered species is high, regulatory action may be warranted; and

(4) **Chronic risk** - the potential for chronic risk is high, regulatory action may be warranted.

The ecotoxicity test values (i.e., measurement endpoints) used in the acute and chronic risk quotients are generally derived from required studies submitted by the registrant. Test values may also be derived from open literature data included in the ECOTOX database. Examples of ecotoxicity values derived from short-term laboratory studies that assess acute effects are: (1) LC_{50} (fish and birds), (2) LD_{50} (birds and mammals), (3) EC_{50} (aquatic plants and aquatic invertebrates), and (4) EC_{25} (terrestrial plants). Examples of toxicity test effect levels derived from the results of long-term laboratory studies that assess chronic effects are: (1) LOAEL (birds, fish, and aquatic invertebrates), and (2) NOAEL (birds, fish and aquatic invertebrates). The NOAEL is generally used as the ecotoxicity test value in assessing chronic effects.

Risk presumptions, along with the corresponding RQs and LOCs are summarized in Table C.1 below.

Table C.1. Risk Presumptions and LOCs

Risk Presumption	RQ	LOC
Birds		
Acute Risk	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day	0.5
Acute Restricted Use	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day (or LD_{50} < 50 mg/kg)	0.2
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day	0.1
Chronic Risk	EEC/NOAEC	1
Wild Mammals		
Acute Risk	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day	0.5
Acute Restricted Use	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day (or LD_{50} < 50 mg/kg)	0.2
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/LC_{50} or LD_{50}/sqft or LD_{50}/day	0.1
Chronic Risk	EEC/NOAEC	1
Terrestrial Invertebrates		
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/LD_{50}	0.5
Aquatic Animals		
Acute Risk	EEC/LC_{50} or EC_{50}	0.5
Acute Restricted Use	EEC/LC_{50} or EC_{50}	0.1
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/LC_{50} or EC_{50}	0.05
Chronic Risk	EEC/NOAEC	1
Terrestrial and Semi-Aquatic Plants		
Acute Risk	EEC/EC_{25}	1
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/EC_{05} or NOAEC	1
Aquatic Plants		
Acute Risk	EEC/EC_{50}	1
Acute Endangered Species	EEC/EC_{05} or NOAEC	1