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LETTERS

Tarring all pesticides with same brush

Re: "Source of statements on pesticides says it all," by Warren Bell, Aug. 25.

Dr. Bell's letter exemplifies a typical strategy of activists who are campaigning to ban pesticides: attack the person, not the science. He lists me as an industry supporter, but says nothing about the limitations of epidemiology, which I mentioned in my letter ("Pesticide evaluations need to be based on facts," Aug. 19).

Obviously, in Bell's opinion, anyone ever connected with industry cannot be trusted and must not care for either his/her own health or that of any Canadian. I believe Bell has the utmost temerity to suggest that I care more about preventing the banning of pesticides than protecting the health of the public.

I have been retired for seven years and receive no remuneration from lobbyists, pesticide companies, manufacturers, or distributors.

Bell mentions atrazine ? an agricultural pesticide not used for landscape and garden purposes ? and how it "deforms frogs." This claim originates from studies performed by Dr. Tyrone Hayes of the University of California, Berkeley, and incorrectly named "Lionel Hays" by Bell.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), because of what it perceives as deficiencies in Hayes' scientific procedures, has not accepted his work on atrazine. Furthermore, the male laboratory-produced frogs used by Hayes, as I understand it, have male cytoplasm and are therefore not like those found in nature.

Since all cytoplasm originates from the female, males should not have a male version. This leads one to question what, if any, relationship Hayes' studies have to do with the frogs found in a natural habitat. It is more important to note that the results of Hayes' studies have not been replicated elsewhere and, as mentioned, are not even accepted by the EPA.

Bell also mentions that Roundup kills frogs. First, there must (under B.C. government legislation) be a buffer zone between the area being treated and any body of water to help prevent run-off into the water. Secondly, there is evidence that it is the Roundup that is formulated with fatty acids that may be toxic to frogs, while the formulations without them are not. It should be noted that herbicidal (organic) soaps, for example, are fatty acids.

As do so many anti-pesticide activists, Bell associates any problem with any pesticide (even if only perceived and not proven) with all pesticides. Extrapolating from this logic, one must suppose that if Bell, as a physician, discovered a problem with any one of the pharmaceuticals which he prescribes, he would be compelled to recommend banning all medicines.

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