

Beware pesticide industry spin on testing

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To the editor:

Re.: Response by Bob Everatt: Claims About Pesticides Not Backed Up, Feb 25 Capital News, to Canadian Cancer Society's and Ms. Kiely's letter: Best to Keep Away from Pesticides, Feb. 8 Capital News.

A retired intelligence analyst, I am currently Canadian honorary observer on the Pesticide Working Group, based in Washington, D.C.

First of all, the word "pesticides" does not mean "insecticides," referring as it does to all kinds of "icides", i.e. describes an entire group of chemicals.

As well, I beg to differ that the chemicals "have been developed under close scrutiny." Whose scrutiny? Industry? Health Canada's?

Health Canada toxicologists merely examine rat data provided by the industry. There is only one epidemiologist on staff at Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and no mechanism to search and review epidemiological (human) studies systematically.

No bibliographies of independent data are compiled. If a single report examined does not overturn the PMRA's decision, it is put in "disregard" file. Yet information on human neurotoxicity, vital developmental toxicity, endocrine (hormone) disruption and routine dioxin contamination is routinely withheld by the industry from the PMRA.

This is a very serious omission, bearing in mind that permanent health damage can affect future generations. Hence our current epidemic of autism, asthma and ADHD (attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder), among other serious health problems.

Only the so-called "active" portion of ready-to-use pesticides is industry tested. The "inert" portion of herbicides, for example, that may constitute as much as 99 per cent of the ready-to-use product, is untested yet known to be toxic. Herbicides, which are known to interact, are applied in untested combination, without an attempt to determine their cumulative effect.

Both education alone and urban integrated pest management (IPM) have proven completely ineffective. Urban use of IPM is ridiculed "as increased pesticide marketing."

We should also keep in mind that there is a difference in the absorption of residues in food and exposure to lawn chemicals. In the first case, the residues go directly to the liver, which is the cleansing organ and in the second case they may be inhaled, thus going directly to the brain. In light of the above, it is obvious which type of pesticide absorption—in food or via inhalation—is causing the greatest harm, especially to young children.

As an owner of an attractive weedless lawn, maintained entirely without the use of pesticides, I am well aware that we already do have effective means of organic lawn maintenance and more new, safer products are being developed.

K. Jean Cottam, PhD,

Nepean, ON

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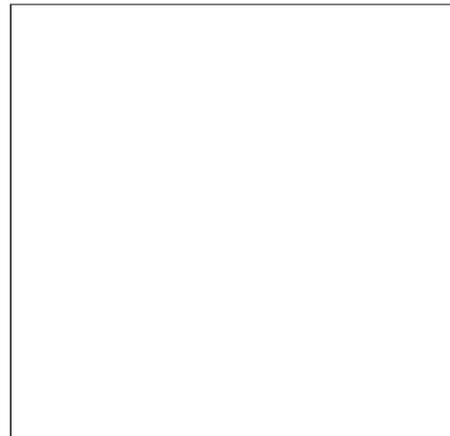
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