

## See 2,4-D risk in context

BY GREG ROOKE, THE STARPHOENIX    JUNE 12, 2010

Bronwyn Eyre's column, Too much yellow in our green spaces (SP, June 5), described the presence of dandelions in public parks as a "civic disgrace."

She argues the city should be using 2,4-D because the Pest Management Regulatory Agency has deemed this herbicide as "safe."

The PMRA has never stated 2,4-D is safe, only that it poses an "acceptable risk." When the agency audits a pesticide product, it considers the health and environmental concerns verses the value or usefulness of the product.

In an agricultural context, where pesticides are applied by professionals among very sparse populations and serve the role of increasing crop yields, the argument for them is more compelling. However, in the urban setting, where untrained users apply pesticides in a densely populated area purely for aesthetic purposes, their use becomes much more controversial.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians in 2004 reviewed the health effects of pesticides and found evidence of "serious harmful effects including cancer, reproductive effects and impacts on the nervous system," and placed 2,4-D specifically on the list of harmful chemicals.

The Lung Association of Saskatchewan, the Canadian Cancer Society, and the Saskatoon Health Region all have taken a stance against the use of turf pesticides.

There are two sides to this debate, and we must consider both to make an informed decision. However, we must ask whether we are willing to risk our health for the sake of a yellow flower?

Greg Rooke

Pesticide reduction co-ordinator

Saskatchewan Environmental Society

© Copyright (c) The StarPhoenix