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## Sensible approach to pesticide use

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City council appears to be covering the sensible middle ground when it comes to drafting a bylaw to reduce the use of pesticides in Calgary.

Although it will drive the anti-pesticide lobby buggy, council is steering clear of an outright ban.

Instead, regulations designed to reduce the use of pesticides, which include insecticides, herbicides and fungicides, will be beefed up.

Commercial applicators will face tougher licensing standards and will be required to notify neighbours before treating a lawn.

While the bylaw will accommodate some spot-spraying, it will reduce or ban herbicides designed to be used over large areas.

The province has already announced it is banning herbicide-fertilizer combination products on Jan. 1.

These weed and feed type products accounted for more than one-third of all pesticides sold in Calgary in 2005.

It's been estimated that application of this product can use 10 times the amount of herbicide actually needed.

It only makes sense that we reduce the number of chemicals in our environment -- that eventually wind up leaching into our limited water supply.

Groups such as the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment and the Canadian Cancer Society claim pesticides are linked to cancer and birth defects.

On the other hand, Health Canada says it approves only pesticides that show no increase to health risks and that 350 scientists test the chemicals.

The federal agency is on the same page on this issue as the World Health Organization and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Bans in other cities have proven notoriously ineffective.

In Toronto, where pesticides were banned in 2004, there were only seven convictions in the four years that followed.

Because 95% of the complaints lodged in that city were against lawn-care companies, it makes sense for this city to toughen standards for commercial applications.

Reducing our reliance on pesticides is a no-brainer, but introducing a difficult-to-enforce bylaw isn't the way to do it.

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