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## ARTICLES


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### Alberta's Decision in Pest Control

Congratulations to the Province of Alberta for bucking the ridiculous trend of banning safe, effective and federally approved chemicals for pest control!  
by Art Drysdale

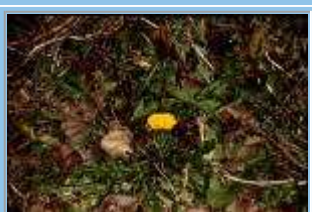
by **Art Drysdale**

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Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tillsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>


**October 30, 2011**



Alberta Environment is an agency of the Government of Alberta that was requested to respond to a motion from the Transportation and Public Works Committee of the City of Edmonton. The motion was developed at the Restriction on Pesticides Hearing, held on February 23rd, 2011. The motion was for the Government of Alberta to review the prohibition and control products in other Canadian provinces and to determine the viability of a similar approach in Alberta.

Alberta Environment noted that municipal and provincial governments struggle with the shifting attitudes in public concern towards risk associated with the use of pest control products in urban landscapes. Alberta Environment also observed that the public is dealing with a wide variety of conflicting information on this topic.

Alberta Environment intends to continue strongly to support using science-based evidence, and will not create restrictions or laws that conflict with Health Canada, the federal agency relied upon for health and safety assessments. Restricting access to products that are designed and approved to be used safely conflicts with Alberta Environment's assessment of the public's need for access to all tools





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*Above, shots of a single dandelion; a lawn typically infested with almost as much yellow as green; a lawn later in the season after the dandelion flowers have gone; and a shot of plantains dying after an application of 2,4-D. Below, a 'beautiful' ragweed plant in a front garden (I can hear the hay fever sufferers reacting!); goutweed dying as a result of an application of Total WipeOut; and a strip of weedy turf to which I applied the very first formulated batch of Weed 'n Feed (to be manufactured soon then by Shur-Gain) in May 1961! Author photos.*



available for controlling a variety of pests.

In response to this question, Alberta Environment has provided a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister and a review of pesticide active ingredients banned in other provinces.

The Ministry's response indicates no intent to ban the sale of any pesticides in Alberta beyond the previous action prohibiting the sale of 'weed and feed' combination herbicide/fertilizer products.

Here is the letter.

"Alberta Environment was requested to respond to a Transportation and Public Works Committee motion developed at the Restriction on Pesticides Hearing, held on February 23, 2011.

"The motion was for the provincial government to review the ban of pesticide ingredients in other Canadian provinces and to determine the viability of a similar approach in Alberta.

"Our review notes that municipal and provincial governments struggle with the shifting attitudes in public concern towards risk associated with pesticide use in urban landscapes. We also observe the public is dealing with a wide variety of conflicting information on this topic.

"Although several municipalities across Canada have imposed bans on pesticide use within their jurisdiction, they do not have the authority to restrict sales and have looked to their provincial governments for such action.

"Alberta Environment has monitored pesticide bans over the past few years and the approaches taken by other jurisdictions, and has found the basis for municipal action confusing and inconsistent. To achieve a more unified approach within their jurisdictional boundaries some provincial governments have responded to the municipal bans, which has created further confusion and inconsistency.

"Alberta Environment has the mandate for pesticide management in Alberta, which involves the classification of pesticides and the authorizations required for their sales and use.

"The Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada has the mandate for approval of pesticides for use in Canada.

"We rely on and direct all individuals, agencies or governments to this federal body of expertise regarding the health and safety assessments and/or toxicological concerns for the pesticides approved for use in Canada.

"To date, Alberta Environment has imposed a ban only on the sale and use of lawn care products that have been formulated with coupled fertilizer and herbicide (in particular, those containing the pesticide active ingredients 2,4-D, Mecoprop, and Dicamba commonly referred to as 'weed and feed').

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"Our action, which involved the assessment of years of water monitoring data and sales and use data from the two major cities in Alberta, was science-based and designed to remove a pesticide formulation (and not the active ingredients) that contributed to unnecessary over-application causing impact on our surface water down-stream from urban centres.

"This action was supported by all provincial governments, Alberta municipal governments and industry. In addition, the federal government is no longer supporting such 'weed and feed' coupled formulations for lawn and turf use and these products will no longer be available in Canada after December 31, 2012.

"Alberta Environment will continue to strongly support using science-based evidence, and will not create restrictions or laws that conflict with the federal government, who we rely on for health and safety assessments.

"Restricting access to products that are designed and approved to be used safely conflicts with our assessment of the public's need for access to all tools available for controlling a variety of pests.

"Alberta Environment has monitored the sales and use of pesticides in the major urban landscapes, and our information reflects a continued need and support for such products, whether it be for weed, insect or disease control.

"The variation in geography and type of pests, and the episodic nature of pest outbreaks (particularly in municipalities comprised and/or surrounded by agricultural influence) requires flexibility and continued access to pesticide products.

"The pesticide bans in eastern Canada have resulted in a range of activities, from the introduction of many new lower-risk pesticides [none of which is as effective as the existing products being banned in other provinces--ACD] to some manufacturers no longer marketing their products in Canada, and to the cross-border transport of pesticides that may or may not be approved for use in Canada. Whether favourable or not, the impact on the consumer is contributing to great confusion, and is leading to compliance and enforcement challenges.

"Alberta Environment DOES NOT INTEND TO MOVE TO PROHIBIT the sale of pesticides beyond the current prohibition we have on 'weed and feed' lawn care products."

So said Alberta Environment's Ernie Hui, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy Division.

Here's a shout-out to Alberta!

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