

Cosmetic pesticide ban means dandelions more expensive to fight

New biological pesticides too expensive for mass application, city says

By Holly Caruk, [CBC News](#) Posted: May 19, 2016 4:32 PM CT Last Updated: May 19, 2016 4:32 PM CT



A sea of yellow dandelions has swept across city parks and boulevards, and when it comes to battling the blooms, the city's hands are tied. (Gary Solilak/CBC)

A province-wide cosmetic pesticide ban that came into effect last June means homeowners and lawn care companies have had to find new ways to battle weeds. The most visible of which, are dandelions.

And it'll cost you.

"There's not a lot of choices. You can dig them out...or you can apply these new bio-weed controls that are available to us," said David Hinton, president of Weed Man in Winnipeg.

"The thing with those is they are fairly expensive and they have to be applied multiple times to be effective."



David Hinton, president of Weed Man, says most customers have been willing to pay the added costs of treating their lawns with new province-approved pesticides. He says the best way to fight weeds is to keep the grass healthy with methods like fertilizer, regular seeding and aeration. (Holly Caruk/CBC)

The product of choice is called Fiesta. It's an iron-based product that when applied to lawns will kill the weeds but the grass recovers quickly from it.

For the average homeowner the cost of having a lawn professionally treated throughout the season may be \$80 to \$100 more than it was before the ban came into effect.

But for the city, that cost grows exponentially.

"We're talking about huge fields [where] it has to be applied to two or three times in the spring. That's a pretty expensive product to use," said Rodney Penner, city naturalist.

The city's approach to dealing with the yellow blooms is to mow them. That's because the cost of treating them with a province-approved pesticide is financially out of reach.

When compared to the spray program in 2013, which Penner estimates cost around \$60,000, the city would be looking at a much higher bill.



Rodney Penner is a naturalist with the city of Winnipeg. He says the current method of choice to battle dandelions in the city is to mow them. (Gary Solilak/CBC)

"If we would do the number of applications indicated for Fiesta it would be about \$560,000," said Penner.

"There's a lot of things to consider, it's not just the cost of the product. It also has to be applied at heavier rates and it has to be applied multiple times throughout the season," said Penner.

Applying the product multiple times adds staffing and equipment costs, which are not currently in the budget.

Weeding out pesticide use tough to track

While lawn care experts are seeing results with the new product, and complying with new rules, homeowners seem to be confused as to what options they have.

"We've heard of people buying products down in Grand Forks [but] it's against the law to use those in Manitoba. There are people that I've heard ... [who] have a farmer friend that are getting agricultural product to put on their lawn," said Hinton.

Hinton says people are often confused about what they can use because the banned products are still available in stores for certain uses.

Home and garden stores lock up chemicals that are used to treat specific problems that pose health risks, like poison ivy, but there's nothing that guarantees those products are used as directed.

"We do see people buying the banned products. They are being sold the banned products, which we don't agree with," said Hinton.

"People want to maintain their yard and they want it to look good so they're going to whatever extent they have to be able to take care of the weeds."



The cost of treating the city's parks and boulevards with the province-approved pesticides would be exponentially higher than it was before the ban came into effect. (Holly Caruk/CBC)

Hinton says he'd like to see more enforcement when it comes to certain products, but admits it's hard to track what individuals might be using on their lawns.

"It's pretty difficult to catch people by the light of the moon treating their weeds," he said.

The province says it believes businesses are largely in compliance with the new regulations and that they worked with retailers in 2015 to educate them about the new law.