

Letter to the PA Herald in response to article on Prince Albert's pesticide use

11 August 2017

Re: **Pesticide opponents see greener way to kill weeds: goats**

(City spokesperson Alanna Adamko) “said the city only uses products that are completely approved and safe for human use.”

First let's clarify that the term *pesticide* is a general term that includes *herbicides*, *insecticides*, *fungicides*, *miticides*, *fumigants*, *rodenticides*, *etc* and even *wood preservatives* and *anti-bacterials* (used in soaps for instance).

A pesticide registration is totally unrelated on whether a pesticide is safe or not. All the regulatory agency determines is an “acceptable risk” based on a concept now known to be outdated and irrelevant. In addition, it is illegal according to the Canadian Pest Control Products Act and its Regulations to state that registration of a pesticide means it is safe (1). Remember that *DDT*, *Agent Orange*, *Furedan* and many other toxins were registered at one time and are all off the market now because too dangerous. If the system worked why did they ever get registered?

The second point is that Ms Adamko's statement may illustrate why the City of Prince Albert is not taking the issue of the public's pesticide exposure seriously. If they really believe pesticides are 'safe' (implying they are safe because registered) and opponents complain for nothing, the City is not likely to give adequate notice of spraying because pesticides are safe, right? Wrong. Glyphosate is now recognized as a probable human carcinogen. When a pesticide gets into leather, for instance, you may as well throw the item away because it cannot be removed. That means you are exposed every time you wear your leather shoes or jacket, or use your leather purse. Many more registered pesticides are known to cause health issues, and widely contaminate our environment. People with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS) react to pesticides. MCS is a recognized disability in Canada. In 2003, Statistics Canada determined that 2.9% of Canadians were medically diagnosed with MCS. The rate had increased to 3.39% in 2010, with over 1,240,000 people affected.(2) Other people that are affected by pesticides are the 8.4% of the Canadian population with asthma, those with other respiratory problems, and children and anyone on medication which can be harmed with much lower doses.

Pesticide use and notification is not only a public safety issue, but it is an issue of accommodation for a disability. It is equivalent to not having wheelchair ramps because able people don't need them.

My final point is that there are alternatives to weeding, for many conditions. Weeds can be prevented with appropriate lawn care (3). Here are some options for weeding hard surfaces. There are some quite effective crack weeders available for a few dollars (4), and I use an Ecoweeder (5) on my street and it works great. There have been successful steam machines but I don't know where they are currently available in North America. There should also be good expertise from the hundred of municipalities with pesticide bylaws in Canada (6). I also developed a class for municipalites wanting to get rid of their pesticide addiction (7). Beyond Pesticides has an annual conference with a workshop with experts on natural weed control. (8)

Thank you for the opportunity to write about this important topic,

Paule Hjertaas, President and spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides (SNAP) at www.snapinfo.ca and https://www.facebook.com/SaskatchewanNetworkForAlternativesToPesticides/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

References

1. Pest control Products Act <http://lois-laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/P-9.01/page-2.html#h-6>
Packaging, labeling and advertisement
(7) No person shall package, label or advertise a pest control product in a way that is false, misleading or likely to create an erroneous impression regarding its character, value, quantity, composition, safety or registration.
2. <http://www.snapinfo.ca/links/health> under MCS/Allergies
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXsqNh8O4vY&index=7&list=PLHS5IfcFy5fzQmBhIqTOqPzSK5pSmqMo&spfreload=1>
4. <http://www.leevalley.com/us/garden/page.aspx?cat=2,2300&p=33275> where the cheapest one can be bought for \$6.50. They may be available cheaper somewhere else too.
5. <http://www.chemfree-weedcontrol.com/chemical-free-weedcontrol/>
6. Municipalities with Pesticide Bylaws in Canada [Population Statistics by Municipality](#) (June 2016 update) at <http://www.snapinfo.ca/issues/bylaws>
7. <http://www.snapinfo.ca/programs>
8. This year's conference links are <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MtQ5fv-bWs&t=1625s> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MtQ5fv-bWs&index=17&list=PLHS5IfcFy5cXcht1lxwxIbAPekpNPmYQ>