

School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives

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Beyond Pesticides / National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides
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School Board Opposes Community Pesticide Use

The Napa County California Board of Education voted unanimously to formally request that the county agricultural commission not use toxic pesticides around school grounds, according to the *Napa Valley Register*. The request, sent in early October, is specific to any future plans to control the glasswinged sharpshooter (GWSS), which spreads a vineyard and citrus disease known as Pierce's disease.

The school board is playing a leadership role in the county on pesticide policy and protection of children. According to the *Register*, "The board is the first governmental body in Napa to request such action. Sixteen schools, childcare centers and office buildings are impacted." Board member

Janna Waldinger, who championed the effort, said, "Most people just don't know the consequences of neurotoxins (in pesticides)."

Because of the economic impact, the insect's control is viewed as essential to stopping the spread of Pierce's Disease. The California Department of Agriculture has historically recommended the use of carbaryl and synthetic pyrethroids, both controversial because of their neurotoxic properties. Environmentalists have urged the adoption of alternative measures that include cultural practices, biological controls, and the use of more benign materials, such as kaolin clay. One biological control agent, *Gonatocerus triggattatus*, is currently being used to help

control the GWSS. This tiny, stingerless, parasitic wasp deposits its eggs in the larger GWSS egg masses, killing them as the wasps develop. The county released 1,600 wasps into crepe myrtle trees in Vacaville from late August through mid-September, according to the GWSS Task Force of Kern and Tulare Counties.

Such alternative controls offer a much safer environment for school children, because of the tendency for agricultural pesticides to drift off-site onto school grounds and other areas. Take action by speaking out against drifting pesticides in your community. Contact Beyond Pesticides at (202) 543-5450 for more information or see www.beyondpesticides.org/schools.

Children's Pesticide Exposure Study Postponed

Critics Cite Efficacy and Scientific Concerns

After causing an uproar in the environmental community and from within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) itself, EPA announced that it will postpone its proposed Children's Environmental Exposure Research Study (CHEERS) until at least Spring 2005. The CHEERS study would involve 60 children over two years in Duval County, Florida to collect information on their exposure to pesticides and other household chemicals.

According to a *Chemical & Engineering News* article on October 18, 2004, the researchers planned to study children who live in homes with "potentially high pesticide use." Their parents, who will receive up to \$970 and a free video camcorder for participating, must agree to routinely spray or have pesticides sprayed inside their homes during the two-year study period. Chemical concentrations will be measured

in air, dust, and urine samples of the children before and after pesticide applications.

The public advertising of the study did not disclose any potential hazards of pesticide
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Iowa School Wins IPM STAR Award for Excellence

Dubuque Community School District (DCSD) in Dubuque, Iowa has won the latest IPM STAR award, becoming only the eleventh school district in the nation to achieve this distinction.

The IPM program at DCSD was initiated in 2003 as an alternative to the old technique of baseboard spraying. A recent complaint about cockroaches at one of the high schools, most likely transported by a student's backpack, shows how the school's IPM approach works. A leaking pipe was found that was providing the pests with access to drinking water. After the leak was fixed, the cockroaches disappeared.

The lesson: without water, cockroaches that make their way into the school cannot survive.

IPM STAR certification is a rigorous process that includes an on-site inspection by an independent professional trained in IPM. History of pest problems, condition of buildings and grounds, as well as any pesticides used in the past three years are examined. Schools must have an IPM policy and plan in place to guide administrators and staff as they respond to pest issues. For details, contact the IPM Institute of North America at 608-232-1528, or www.ipminstitute.org.

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Prepping for Springtime Turf Care?

What to Know About Preemergent Herbicides and Lawn Health

Preemergent herbicides are herbicides meant to prevent the emergence of weeds later in the year. However, in recent decades weeds have been shown to become resistant to chemicals. Furthermore, preemergents contaminate surface and ground waters due to their persistence in soil. The presence of toxic chemicals in a children's environment is unnecessarily risky considering that many lawn chemicals are associated with acute health effects, cancer, birth defects and neurotoxicity. Children are especially vulnerable to pesticide poisoning because of their developing organ systems and relative body weights. Fortunately, these problems and costs can be avoided if you opt to maintain a healthy lawn that naturally resists weeds and pests. As the winter-time dormancy period tapers off, start planning early spring-time turf with these steps:

- Rake winter debris from the turf once the ground has thawed.
- Aerate turf (once now, and one more time later in the year) by mechanically loosening or puncturing the soil. This step helps to ease compaction caused by snowfall. Aerating allows air, water and nutrients to reach the deep root systems of your grass and will result in better plant growth.
- If you wish to use a preemergent, opt for corn gluten meal. This non-toxic alternative is the protein fraction in corn, and inhibits root formation in a wide variety of grasses and broadleaf weeds during germination. Corn gluten meal, because of its high nitrogen content, can be applied to turf grass as a fertilizer and top dressing. Although large applications are needed, it is effective in suppressing annual weeds such as crabgrass.
- Early spring is a great time to test your soil's health. Sample the soil with a "soil probe." Cut or dig a small hole about 10" deep with at least one side of the hole straight or smooth. The lawn should have between 5"-6" of topsoil, which is the darkest soil layer. If needed, add topdressings of organic matter, such as composted manures. Also test for proper pH, and presence of soil nutrients.

Continue to keep turf healthy by practicing proper mowing and watering, de-thatching, and fertilizing correctly. If weeds do pop up, don't panic. There are plenty of alternative methods to control them without the use of hazardous materials. For more information, contact Beyond Pesticides at (202) 543-5450 or see www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn.

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use around children. Studies show that children living in households where pesticides are used suffer elevated rates of leukemia, brain cancer and soft tissue sarcoma. EPA has also affirmed that children receive 50 percent of their lifetime cancer risks in the first two years of life.

After the study was announced, an outbreak of internal protests and emails among EPA staffers took place, according to the *Washington Post*. EPA Regional Toxicologist Suzanne Wuerthele wrote to her colleagues that she feared poor families would not understand the dangers associated with pesticide exposure.

The study design aimed at children ages 0-3 months and 9-12 months came under intense fire for, among other things, lacking safeguards to adequately protect participating families and children, failure to disclose hazards to participants, and for receiving partial funding of \$2.1 million from the American Chemical Council (ACC).

In an apparent effort to ensure that the study would meet ethical and scientific standards an internal EPA memo stated that the study will be postponed until it is reviewed by an expert panel made up of members from several internal EPA advisory committees.

TAKE ACTION: Express your concerns about this children's study to the EPA Administrator at EPA, Ariel Rios Bldg, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20460.