Ohio Activists Take Legal Action to Stop Mosquito Spraying

After several seasons of keeping mosquito spray trucks off of their streets, Cuyahoga County, Ohio activists suffered a defeat this September, when the county board of health made the decision to apply pesticides for the first time since West Nile virus hit the U.S. While disappointed with the county's decision to spray, the activists from the suburbs of Cleveland, known as the Ohio Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (OCAMP) struck back by immediately filing a lawsuit against the Cuyahoga County Board of Health and the City of Cleveland on September 5, 2002 in the County Court of Common Pleas. Citing adverse health effects and lack of efficacy, the lawsuit requests injunctive relief to halt the broadcast spraying of pesticides for mosquitoes. The county is currently using synthetic pyrethroids, which are neurotoxic and some have been linked to endocrine disruption, breast cancer and anaphylactic (allergic) reactions. Other symptoms of acute toxicity due to inhalation include sneezing, nasal stuffiness, headache, nausea, incoordination, tremors, convulsions, facial flushing and swelling, and burning and itching sensations. The hearing date for a permanent injunction is scheduled for March 18, 2003. *For more information, contact Barry Zucker, director of OCAMP at 440-442-1818.*

Study Shows Farmers Poisoned by Pesticides Can Cause Depression

Pesticides can be depressing, literally. A recent study published in the August 2002 *Annals of Epidemiology* (Vol. 12, No. 6), shows that farmers exposed to pesticides have nearly a six-fold increased risk of suffering from depressive symptoms. "Pesticide Poisoning and Depressive Symptoms Among Farm Residents" looks at individuals' exposure to agriculture use of organophosphate pesticides. Between 1992 and 1997, 761 farmers and their spouses were part of the study conducted throughout eight counties in northeastern Colorado. After accounting for other known depression risk factors such as age, marital status, education level and alcohol use, farmers who reported organophosphate poisoning were 5.8 times more likely to score high on tests measuring level of depression than farmers who did not report having been poisoned. The study authors, Lorann Stallones and Cheryl Beseler of Colorado State University in Fort Collins, wrote that they looked at the association between pesticides and depression because higher rates of depression have been reported among farmers in some states. *A copy of the study is available online at http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001001-d001100/d001084/d001084.html, or call beyond Pesticides for a hardcopy.*

NY Attorney General Finds Widespread Pesticide Use in Low-Income Urban Housing, Schools and Parks

A report released August 20, 2002 by New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer reveals widespread use of pesticides in public housing developments, schools and parks, despite the availability of less toxic methods of effective pest control. Unlike other studies, *Pest Control in Urban Housing, Parks and Schools: Children at Risk*, examines the cumulative impacts of pesticides on urban children. The report identifies a clear need for improved pest management practices that do not heavily rely on using toxic pesticides. "Urban children spend about 90% of their time either in their homes, at school or in public parks," Mr. Spitzer said. "These places are often treated with pesticides that could threaten children's health. It is entirely possible to control pest problems without resorting to the use of toxic pesti-

cides. With children's health at stake, managers of these facilities and residents should make every effort to eliminate pest problems without using toxic pesticides." The Attorney General's office surveyed the pest management policies and practices for the year 2000 of various public housing developments and nearby schools and parks in Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Syracuse and Yonkers. The report finds that 80% of housing developments surveyed apply pesticides inside apartments and in common areas on a regular basis, rather than limiting application to identified pest problems. Statewide, 69% of responding residents apply pesticides in their own homes, and one-third do so at least once a week. Many of the pesticides used are highly toxic and some are illegal in New York. 71% of responding schools report using pesticides, and schools in New York City and Yonkers report using restricted use pesticides (which must be applied by, or under the supervision of, a certified applicator due to their high toxicity or due to their potential to persist and accumulate in the environment). Three parks, one in New York City; and two in Yonkers, report using herbicides for aesthetic, as opposed to public health, purposes. *The report is available on the Attorney General's web site (www.oag.state.ny.us). For more information, call 518-473-5525.*

Natural Compound in Tomatoes Repels Pests Better Than DEET

As if seizures, confusion, slurred speech, rashes, swelling, itching and eye irritation weren't enough reasons not to use DEET-based insect repellents, scientists at North Carolina State University have found a natural compound that repels insects better than the toxic, yet widely used bug spray. Entomology professors Michael Roe and William Neal Reynolds, found that a natural compound found in tomatoes, named "IBI-246," is so effective at repelling insects that the university patented and licensed the right to produce it as an insect repellent. Dr. Roe said he discovered the repellent capacity of IBI-246 by accident. While listening to a scientific presentation about protein mimics as a diet pill for the control of mosquito larvae, he realized that the compounds being discussed were similar to a compound found in wild tomatoes that he and another NC State

entomologist, George Kennedy, had studied a number of years earlier. Drs. Roe and Kennedy had studied the compound, which is part of the tomato's natural defenses against insects, to see if it might be used to control worms that eat tomatoes. Dr. Roe revisited the compound and tested it as a mosquito repellent. He found that it not only repelled mosquitoes, but ticks, fleas, cockroaches, ants and biting flies, as well as agricultural insects such as aphids and thrips. The cost of producing IBI-246 is expected to be competitive to the production cost of DEET. While it is impossible to tell how long the approval process will take, the researchers are hopeful that IBI-246 will win EPA approval by the end of the year. Other natural insect repellents include citronella, soybean, eucalyptus, lemongrass and catnip oils. *For more information on IBI-246, contact Dr. Michael Roe, 919-515-4325 or michael_roe@ncsu.edu. For more information about mosquitoes and least-toxic insect repellents, please contact Beyond Pesticides.*

New Study Finds Agricultural Pesticides Play an Important Role in Frog Deformities

Penn State University researcher Joseph Kiesecker found that wild tadpoles exposed to low-level agricultural chemicals along with the deformity-causing parasite trematode are five times more likely to develop leg deformities than frogs only exposed to the trematode. The Penn State researchers believe the presence of the pesticides weakens the frogs' immune systems thereby making them more susceptible to infection by the parasites. In the lab, Dr. Kiesecker found that pesticide exposed tadpoles have higher rates of parasitic infection and a matching reduction in white blood cell production, a commonly used indicator of a weakened immune system. All of the pesticide concentrations investigated in the experiment are below EPA-recommended levels for safe drinking water. "If it's true that commonly used pesticides compromise the immune system of a vertebrate organism, which is what the findings suggest, then we're looking at a much bigger problem then deformed frogs," said David Gardiner of the University of California at Irvine. Although trematode does not infect humans, many parasites do. A notable example is Schistosoma, which causes 200 million cases of disease including over 20,000 deaths each year. *More information on the pesticide link to frog deformities can be found at: http://www.science.psu.edu/alert/Kiesecker7-2002.htm, or contact Beyond Pesticides for further information.*

Threats from U.S. Industry Will Not Change Quebec Pesticide Ban, Says Minister of Environment

Showing he has a backbone, Quebec Environmental Minister Andre Boisclair refused to back down from a proposed ban of 28 pesticides on public and private land in the Canadian province, even after the giant U.S. pesticide industry threatened him with a lawsuit. Major manufacturers of the weed-killer 2,4-D, which is included in the list of Quebec's banned pesticides, plan to sue the Canadian province, citing Chapter 11 of the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA), which allows private companies to sue governments. Donald Page, executive director of the Industry Task Force II on 2,4-D, said Quebec must prove 2,4-D is carcinogenic before it can ban the herbicide. Although studies show that 2,4-D can cause reproductive effects, nervous system damage, damage to the kidneys and liver, birth defects, endocrine disruption and possibly cancer, Mr. Page is currently heading a $30 million research program to show that 2,4-D is safe. The Quebec government has no plans to compensate commercial horticultural companies an estimated $15 million they will lose in lost sales. According to Minister Boisclair, "It's the responsibility of businesses that offer products which harm human health." The Minister is not surprised to hear this sort of reaction from the pesticide industry. He believes their actions echo those of the U.S. tobacco industry, who spent years attempting to disprove the link between cigarettes and cancer before the government adopted restrictive legislation. Minister Boisclair's proposed ban will impose immediate fines up to $30,000 (Canadian) for the use of the listed pesticides on provincial and municipal-owned property. Private land owners will have three years to comply. Pesticide use on agricultural land will not be affected. *To view a list of the pesticides proposed to be banned, visit http://www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/communiques/2002/c020703a-anglais-pesticides.doc.*

Court Orders Government to Ensure Pesticide Use Will Not Harm Endangered Salmon

On July 3, 2002, Federal Judge John Coughenour ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) violated the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) by not setting guidelines for pesticides that are protective of endangered salmon. The court found that EPA has a legal obligation under ESA to review the impacts of pesticide use and curtail uses that are harmful to salmon. The court decision calls EPA's "wholesale noncompliance" with its ESA obligations "patently unlawful." Effective immediately, EPA must consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding pesticides' potential impact on salmon populations. "The announcement represents a sweeping victory for both the people and the salmon in the Pacific Northwest," said Earthjustice attorney Patti Goldman, who represented environmental and commercial fishing organizations in the case. "EPA had flouted its legal obligation to stop harmful pesticide uses and the Court put an end to that disregard of the law." According to the plaintiffs, which include the Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, Washington Toxics Coalition, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and Institute for Fisheries Resources, EPA's own documents find that current uses for several dozen pesticides are likely to result in surface water contamination levels that threaten fish or their habitat. EPA's findings along with U.S. Geological Survey water quality data identify 55 pesticides that pose documented threats to salmon. According to the ruling, "It is undisputed that EPA has not initiated, let alone completed, consultation with respect to the relevant 55 pesticide active ingredients."

Lawrence, KS Establishes Pesticide-Free Parks

Due to the hard work of a strong grassroots movement, the city of Lawrence, KS recently announced its decision to convert three of its public parks to pesticide-free public space. The conversion of the three small parks, totaling 12 acres brought applause from local environmentalists. Terry Shistar, long-time environmental activist and resident in the Lawrence area, member of the Greens, and board member of Beyond Pesticides said, "These are pretty small parks, but it's a start. The new action goes beyond a previous city commitment to reduce pesticide use by going pesticide-free." The city's actions got underway just as the nation's homeowners were gearing up to dump upwards of 50 million pounds (active ingredients) of herbicides on their home lawns and gardens last spring and summer at a cost of nearly $500 million, according to the most recent EPA data (1999). Another $1.5+ billion is spent on another 87 million pounds of insecticides, fungicides, and other pesticides, totaling over $2 billion in pesticides purchased and used by homeowners. Cities across the country are considering bans similar to Lawrence, KS. Actions in a number of Canadian cities, which have established pesticide-free ordinances, have attracted worldwide attention. In October 1996, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to pass a landmark pesticide ordinance, which bans the use of the most toxic pesticides.