



BEYOND PESTICIDES

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National Coalition Launches Neighborhood Hang-Tag Campaign for Safe Lawns

Washington DC, April 3, 2006 – Little yellow caution flags warning KEEP OFF are popping up on lawns across the nation with the arrival of Spring. This season, concerned people are taking to the streets to alert their neighbors to the dangers that pesticides cause children, pets and wildlife with a new Safe Lawn Door-Hanger, spearheaded by the National Coalition for Pesticide-Free Lawns. Grassroots groups and citizens across the nation will be hanging tags in the hopes of stopping lawn chemical use, and urging the adoption of safer practices.

"The average do-it-yourselfer using the traditional Four-Step Chemical Program and "weed and feed" type products is simply unaware that these are poisons that they are exposing their children and pets to," said Eileen Gunn, Project Director for Beyond Pesticides who coordinates the lawns campaign. *"People who hire a lawn service may not give much thought to what that company is actually doing. They may also not be aware of the growth of companies that offer an organic care program that uses natural fertilizers and management systems that prevent weeds and insect problems."*

This Safe Lawns Door-Hanger campaign is being launched on the heels of a federal government report released March 3, 2006, *The Quality of Our Nation's Waters Pesticides in the Nation's Streams and Ground Water, 1992-2001*, which finds that pesticides linked to cancer, birth defects and neurological disorders contaminate almost all of the nation's rivers and streams and most fish.

Of the 30 commonly used lawn pesticides 19 are carcinogens, 13 linked with birth defects, 21 with reproductive effects, 15 with neurotoxicity, 26 with liver or kidney damage, 27 are irritants,

and 11 can disrupt the hormone system. Pregnant women, infants and children, the aged and the chronically ill are at greatest risk from pesticide exposure. A new scientific study released in March 2006 shows that children are 65-164 times more sensitive than adults to some pesticides.

Outdoor exposures and contamination are not the only issue. When pesticides are tracked inside they remain in carpets and household dust. For instance, 2,4-D, the most common herbicide in “weed and feed,” has been detected in homes at levels ten times higher than before the application.

The warnings people receive prior to and after a pesticide application vary in the 21 states that have notification laws. In some states, signs are required to be posted in conspicuous points of access and remain up for 72 hours, warning people to KEEP OFF!

The number of organic landscape companies is growing rapidly. A 2004 national survey reveals that 5 million homeowners use only organic lawn practices and products and 35 million people use both toxic and non-toxic materials. The National Pesticide-Free Lawns Coalition seeks to raise awareness about the ever-increasing availability of safer alternatives to maintaining beautiful landscapes.

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