

Review of the Issues in Manitoba: Pesticides Update

by Glenda Whiteman, Concerned Residents of Winnipeg (CROW), Inc.

Momentum seems to be building in Manitoba towards reduction of pesticide use. This is not just a local phenomenon, as currently 68 municipalities across Canada have adopted pesticide by-laws—including Toronto, Montreal and Halifax—in spite of intensive lobbying by the lawn care industry. In fact, even globally there is reason to celebrate, as May marks the phase-out of twelve persistent organic pollutants under the Stockholm Convention. According to the Pesticide Action Network North America, “Our world just became a safer place.”

Weed and insect control

However, we must not allow our celebrations for the victories to prevent us from keeping our eyes open to the big picture. So what can we do on the local level? First, be aware. There are essentially two pesticide debates happening in Manitoba as summer approaches: weed and insect control. This review will attempt to provide an update of each.

Winnipeg and Capital region residents ought to be aware of some changes to the Mosquito Control Strategy for 2004. The City and Province have made an effort to improve their notification system. Residents can request to be notified by phone or e-mail of insect control operations in their neighbourhood. E-mail requests must come from the e-mail address at which one wishes to be notified. Residents (including apartment dwellers and renters) can also request buffer zones around their property.

Since 2002, these buffer zones no longer provide protection from applications of larvicide, nor for fogging for West Nile virus, should another “imminent health emergency” be declared.

To register your opposition to pesticide use and protect your home, request a buffer zone and/or notification from both Insect and Weed Control Branches, at: insectcontrol@winnipeg.ca and kcoates@winnipeg.ca. Please cc CROWinc@mts.net.

Dursban and malathion still in use

The City continues to use Dursban (chlorpyrifos) for larviciding in outlying areas, as well as the less toxic *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bti) in residential areas, although they generally do not release all the data that would confirm where Dursban is used. Dursban has been linked to effects on the nervous, cardiovascular and respiratory systems, and residue can persist in the human body for long periods of time, causing delayed symptoms. The City continues to use Dursban on boulevard elm trees and on private property for elm bark beetle control.

Increased public awareness is the purpose of the City’s TEEAM project that will see youth at community events and at randomly selected homes throughout the city teaching techniques to reduce mosquito breeding. A change in the program

this year is that help will be available for seniors or others incapable of doing the physical labour required to eliminate mosquito-breeding sites. Contact the Bug Line at 986-3210 to request a TEAAM audit of your yard.

Malathion fogging in open spaces

Another change this year is the purchase of mobile equipment to fog open spaces such as parks and golf courses with the mosquito adulticide, malathion. The City hopes this measure may reduce the numbers of adult mosquitoes and thus reduce the need to fog in residential areas.

I hope it doesn't lead to an increase in the cancer clusters that have been shown to exist around golf courses.

As the lawn-care debate and corresponding pesticide by-law movement sweeps across Canada, we can expect this issue to become more prevalent in the media in Winnipeg. Organisations in the province will soon be asked to join a Partnership for Pesticide By-laws, a coalition of groups requesting a cosmetic pesticide by-law in Winnipeg, organised by Campaign for Pesticide Reduction! Winnipeg and CROW, Inc. Individuals wishing to assist in this process can contact crowinc@mts.net to get involved.

Organic lawn care alternatives

As well, we can eliminate pesticides in our own yards and encourage our neighbours to do the same. Organic lawn care workshops are provided by the Manitoba Eco-Network. One can proudly display a Pesticide Free Naturally lawn sign with the purchase of a lawn care information kit, available from CROW for \$5.

Remember how effective your voice is. Let your politicians know how you feel. Fogging with adulticides is ineffective at best, and at worst may increase our risk to West Nile virus (www.cche-info.com). Continued use of lawn-care chemicals for cosmetic reasons reduces our immune system functioning, in other words, our ability to defend ourselves from the risk of West Nile virus, not to mention putting us at risk of cancer, dermatologic, chronic neurological and mental health effects. Request an end to these practices today.