School Pesticide Monitor

A Bi-Monthly Bulletin on Pesticides and Alternatives
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New Jersey Bill Prohibits Pesticides on School Lawns

A bill that would make the state of New Jersey a national leader in banning pesticides on all school grounds was passed in a Senate environment committee January with unanimous bi-partisan support.

The measure, dubbed *The Child Safe Playing Field Act*, expands on a 2002 law requiring schools to develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plans that combine pest control, building maintenance, and sanitation practices would prohibit the use of most lawn pesticides on public and private school playgrounds, recreational fields, and day-care centers.

If New Jersey's proposal were to become law, all but a small class of lawn pesticides would be banned from public and private school grounds, including high schools; recreation fields owned by municipalities, counties, or the state. Low-impact organic pesticide applications would be allowed, and there is an exception that allows stronger pesticides during emergencies to eliminate "an immediate threat to human health."

"This legislation is important to protect children's health where they play. At least 40 towns and many schools have declared their parks pesticide free, now it's time to make all playgrounds and playing fields pesticide-free." Jane Nogaki, Vice Chair, NJ Environmental Federation.

The proposal is to be the most far-reaching in the nation. A similar law in New York state covers just school grounds where students are in kindergarten through 12th grade, while Connecticut's version is limited to K-8 schools. New Hampshire and Maine have introduced similar legislation where training programs are in place to educate grounds maintenance people on the basics of sound turf manage-

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Schools in Colorado Begin to Embrace IPM

A growing number of Colorado schools are embracing IPM programs to manage bugs, weeds and mice according to *Education News Colorado.* Despite the fact that the state does not have restrictions on pesticide use other than posting signs, a handful of schools in the Boulder Valley, Denver and Sterline districts, along with Colorado State University are starting to use IPM.

"There are pest problems in the schools," said Assefa Gebre-Amlak, a Colorado State University Extension Service pest-management specialist. "And because of that, schools and school districts tend to use a very traditional approach to pest control … In some cases, they don't even consider whether they currently have a pest problem. They just go ahead and spray."

Three years ago, Colorado State University Extension Service received a grant to survey schools' pesticide use and launch an IPM pilot program. Boulder Valley was the first school district to accept the program.

Schools in Denver have been practicing IPM for years, employing a father-son pest control team for the district. Rather than just relying on bait stations to combat a persistent mouse problem, the duo prefers to plug holes and install door sweeps to keep the mice out. They say that they haven't used an ounce of pesticide in at least a year.

Though the focus has shifted away from using pesticides to prevention, Colorado as a whole has been slow to follow the IPM movement and still has a long way to go.

For more information on efforts to reduce pesticide use in Colorado and how to get involved, join Beyond Pesticides at our 29th National Pesticide Forum, Sustainable Community: Practical solutions for health and the environment. The conference will be held April 8-9, 2011 at the Colorado School of Public Health in Denver (Aurora). See www.beyondpesticides.org/forum for more details.

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Rat Poisons Continue to Threaten Children

Every year, more than 10,000 kids are poisoned by rodenticides (pesticides made to kill rodents) and virtually all of the related calls to U.S. poison control centers concern children under the age of six. New rules and restrictions set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will go into effect next June in an attempt to prevent incidents involving children, but do not go far enough to protect children or wildlife.

Records show that the EPA is aware that children have been getting into these poisons in significant numbers, according to data since 1983.

EPA reported that these rat poisons "are, by far, the leading cause of [pesticide-related] visits to health care facilities in children under the age of six years and the second leading cause of hospitalization." Poisoned children can suffer internal bleeding, coma, anemia, nosebleeds, bleeding gums, bloody urine and bloody stools.

Now, decades after these products were first introduced to the public, EPA is moving to curb widespread use of these rodenticides, starting June 2011. However environmentalists feel the new rules fall short of adequately protecting the health of people, wildlife and the environment.

EPA is requiring that ten rodenticides used in bait products marketed to consumers be enclosed in bait stations, making the pesticide inaccessible to children and pets, and is also prohibiting the sale of loose bait, such as pellets, for use in homes.

EPA believes this will reduce the amount of product in the environment, providing additional protection for wildlife from poisonings by these more toxic and persistent products.

However, many wildlife poisonings do not come from direct contact with the bait. These rodenticides have been involved with the poisonings of federally listed threatened and endangered species, for example the San Joaquin kit fox and Northern spotted owl, and the Bald eagle. Poisonings occur when predators or scavengers feed on poisoned rodents eventually accumulating residues that may be many times the lethal dose.

There are several shortcomings to the new restrictions. Human and wildlife exposures to these toxic chemicals, though slightly minimized, would nevertheless continue because of their continued availability for use in agricultural production and to pest control operators.

Pest control operators will still be allowed to use these chemicals in homes, at their discretion, which means residential exposures continue, albeit at slightly lower levels. These measures also do not apply to rodenticide field uses, or to tracking powder products, which may utilize any of the ten rodenticides, and thus continue to impact residential consumers and non-target wildlife.

Beyond Pesticides believes that IPM is a vital tool that aids in the rediscovery of non-toxic methods to control rodents and facilitates the transition toward a pesticide-free (and healthier) world. Sanitation, structural repairs, mechanical and biological control, pest population monitoring are some IPM methods that can be undertaken to control rodents.

For more information on how to implement IPM, visit www.beyondpesticides.org/saferchoice.

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ment - building healthy soil, planting appropriate grass seed, using compost or aeration to reduce compaction.

Only Canada has a more extensive prohibition: No cosmetic pesticide use is allowed, said John Boechner of the New Jersey Green Industry Council, which represents the lawn-care and pest-management industries and opposes the measure.

Jeff Tittel of the New Jersey Sierra Club, who testified in support of the bill, said the new proposal strengthens the existing law, which was groundbreaking at the time. "Children are our most vulnerable population as far as pesticides go," Mr. Tittel said. "Our first goal should be 'do no harm,' and this bill does that."

Many scientific studies indicate that pesticides threaten the public's health by increasing the risk of cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, birth defects, and reproductive problems. Children are especially sensitive and vulnerable because of their rapid development and behavior patterns.

These chemicals can also poison animals, pollute local streams and rivers and seep through the ground into underground aquifers.

Currently New Jersey uses about four million pounds of pesticides annually for lawn care, mosquito control, agricultural production, and golf course maintenance. Every body of water tested in New Jersey has evidence of pesticide contamination, according to a study by the U.S. Geological Survey.

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