

Composting begins

by Amanda Murray

On November 1, garbage tipping fees for Dalhousie went from \$42 to \$74 per metric tonne.

As the monetary and environmental costs of dumping waste increase, individuals, industries and institutions are looking for other ways to get rid of their waste. A major sector of our waste that remains relatively unexplored is organic, compostable waste. Organic compostables account for approximately 20% of our garbage.

Organic waste includes leftover food scraps, rotten foods, leaves and grass clippings. Composting is collecting organic waste separate from other waste and facilitating the breakdown process by bacteria and microorganisms.

When the organic waste has been broken down, a rich fertilizer called humus will be left. Composting can be done on a small scale in an outdoor bin, indoors with worms or on

a large scale where the breakdown process is sped up and monitored.

Dalhousie has been working on a plan to implement composting throughout the university. Michael Murphy, Manager of Environmental Services at the Dalhousie Physical plant, hopes to see the program begin within the next few weeks. The program would begin in the Student Union Building (SUB) cafeteria, the residence cafeterias and the Tupper Building cafeteria. Compostables would include all food scraps and most non-recyclable paper.

Murphy estimates that the university produces approximately 1500 metric tonnes of garbage every year. And at \$74 per metric tonne, Dalhousie is spending \$111,000 on waste disposal each year. About 300 metric tonnes of this garbage is organic waste and could be composted.

The compost would be delivered to a company in Bedford called Earth Cycle Opportunities. Earth Cycle

Opportunities would then use Dalhousie's compost to begin a pilot project. Earth Cycle Opportunities will begin by collecting 10 metric tonnes of compost each week, at the cost of \$30 per metric tonne.

Earth Cycle Opportunities plans to compost using the *wind row* composting method. This has been proven to be the most effective and least expensive type of composting on a large scale.

David Wimberly, head of Earth Cycle Opportunities, says that it will take 15 days for the organic waste to be turned into high quality fertilizer. This fertilizer can be used to improve the quality of the soil for landscaping or gardening.

Waste reduction is an issue that we all must consider — for ourselves and the institutions that we are affiliated with. Composting serves two useful functions: it helps to reduce landfill problems and it produces a useful product.

POINTLESS PONDERABLES

Last week's answer:

Well, we got a few responses to last week's question (how far can you keep entering the dreaded Nova Scotia Triangle), but unfortunately, none of them were exactly right. It was a tricky question, remember?

So, how far can you keep entering the triangle? Halfway of course. until you reach the halfway point, you're still going *into* the zone. After you pass the halfway point, you're *leaving* it. Nice try to those who sent in their responses, and better luck next time!

This week's question:

You finally got out of the Nova Scotia triangle, and you're heading home to port. Your crew got kind of panicky for a while though, and tried to appease the Gods of the zone by dumping all the food overboard (you never can trust some people...). All that's left for the 2-day trip is 17 apples, which have to be divided up evenly between 16 people. Your crew also dumped all the knives overboard, too, so you can't cut up the apples to go around. What will you do?

Bring in your answers to the gazette, room #312 in the SUB, or email it to gazette@ac.dal.ca The first person to send in the correct answer gets their name published in the next issue.

Hormone researchers face large protest

by Craig Schiller

In a protest against a trade policy proposal that threatens consumers' right to choose healthy food products, more than 300 organizations dumped milk in front of Ottawa's Conference Centre, October 25.

The International Network on Genetically-Engineered Foods (INGEF) spokesperson Jeremy Rifkin says the U.S. government "is more interested in the profits of transnational chemical, pharmaceutical and biotech companies than they are in the public health and safety of consumers in the United States, Canada and other countries around the world."

The Codex Alimentarius, the food policy arm of the United Nations and the World Health Organi-

zation, met in Ottawa Oct. 24-28 to discuss one of the most contentious areas of international trade policy: the labelling of genetically-engineered food products.

INGEF's protest centred around the use of recombinant bovine growth hormone in dairy cows. Treated cows are able to give 25 per cent more milk, but according to INGEF, they also suffer from severe udder infections, reproductive disorders, leg problems and premature death.

Antibiotics used to treat the infections show up in the milk, as do unusually high levels of pus and Insulin Growth Factor-1, which has been linked, when present in high doses, to cancer in humans.

The group also suggests that Monsanto, the pharmaceutical com-

pany which makes the hormone, is burying reports of hormone-related health problems in the U.S., which must be filed with the American Food and Drug Administration. According to Monsanto, the hormone is completely safe.

However, at a talk last Tuesday, Nov. 1 at the Lester Pearson Institute, Alex Boston of the Council of Canadians says that Monsanto is the same company that said PCBs and Agent Orange were also safe.

The growth hormone is not yet available in Canada, but is under consideration. INGEF is calling for the Canadian government to withhold approval for the drug until independent long-term health studies can prove it is indeed safe. As it stands now, the hormone could be used in Canada as early as next July.

Rifkin remains concerned, however, saying that "the success or failure of rBGH [the hormone] in Canada sets the stage for other prod-

ucts to enter the market without labels and without appropriate health testing."

Scientists are currently splicing genes from animal and bacterial sources into plants, creating all sorts of unprecedented new species. New breeds of tomatoes are appearing with genes from arctic flounder to improve their resistance to frost, or with cow genes to improve their shelf life. Potatoes are being bred with new genes from chickens and wax moths. Squash and cantaloupe are being modified with genes from bacteria and viruses.

Minister of Agriculture Ralph Goodale has appointed a task force to study the drug, but Boston says its mandate reflects corporate expectations, "failing to fully examine the human and animal health risks and the impact on farmers."

INGEF is concerned that these foods might not be labelled as genetically-altered. Religious leaders

fear that their members will be unable to adhere properly to dietary codes, and consumer groups fear the health impact of food products we have never eaten before.

The cow gene that is being bred into tomatoes is resistant to common antibiotics, and could conceivably increase resistance in humans as well, rendering a number of common illnesses untreatable. The groups are also worried that in some cases, the new genetic material could trigger food allergies.

The Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG) at Dalhousie, along with the Council of Canadians and other groups, has co-signed a letter to the federal government to request a moratorium on the use of rBGH in Canada. There is also further information on the subject at the NSPIRG office, 3rd floor, SUB.

Steroid use spreading

by Michael Mainville

OTTAWA (CUP) — Muscular, strong and lean.

These three words define the modern ideal image of the male body. The new state-of-the-art physique is displayed everywhere: billboards, commercials, music videos and magazines.

According to a 1993 study commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Drug-Free Sport, about 83,000 Canadians — almost entirely male — between the ages of 11 and 18 use steroids, and nearly half of those cases are solely concerned with improving body image.

"There's all these figures they have to live up to, images they see in the movies," says Guy Murray, fitness director at the Citadel gym and owner of a personal training company in Ottawa.

Murray says he sees new people in the gym everyday, mostly between 16 and 20 years old, whose only purpose is to "get big."

Steroids are quickly becoming one of the most popular ways to do this.

Two types are commonly used, anabolic and corticotrophic, with anabolic steroids being the most popular. Both are synthetic derivatives of the male hormone testosterone. Steroids help increase fluid inside the muscle cell and increase muscle protein. More fluid and protein work to shorten muscle recovery time which allows for more frequent workouts. As a result, the user is therefore stronger and body mass can increase more quickly.

Murray says a lot of people, not seeing the results they want immediately from working out, turn to steroids for a fast answer.

"They don't care about the end result," he says, "They shut themselves off to it. They just want to be big."

However, steroid use commonly leads to prolific outbreaks of acne on the upper back, baldness, shrunken testicles, changes in sexual drive, heavier beards and depression. Prolonged use can increase the chance of any number of physical problems, from heart disease to liver failure.

Dr. Arthur Blouin, an Ottawa

psychologist who is studying the similarities between steroid use and eating disorders, agrees.

"In order to be acceptable to themselves, to see themselves as a happy person, they must be muscular, lean and big." According to Blouin, media pressure is so high that it can make people forget the dangers of using steroids.

These problems can include frequent rages and a psychosis called the "superman complex." This is a state in which users become almost delusional with the sense of invulnerability that comes about after prolonged use of steroids.

In extreme cases, Blouin says, the increased aggressiveness and delusions can lead to violence. Blouin says even if users quit taking the drugs, the problems may continue. He says 25 to 30 per cent of people who stop using steroids experience strong feelings of depression.

The final and possibly most serious risk involved in steroid use is the same danger with any illegal drug — users cannot be sure if drugs bought on the street are pure.

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