

Agent Orange on York lawns?

by Trevor Burnett

York University has been spraying the campus with a herbicide that at

least one environmental group says is potentially dangerous.

The university's grounds and vehicles department has been spraying

lawns this summer with Killlex, which contains the controversial weed killer 2 4-D.

According to grounds and vehicles

superintendent Chris Mark, the chemical poses no risk to students.

"2 4-D is widely used in the industry for weed control. It is legal and

to our knowledge — based on the reports we have read — it contains no Dioxins."

"There is a lot of confusion between 2 4-D and 2 4 5-T, which was used in Agent Orange (the cancer-causing defoliant used in the Vietnam War) and did contain Dioxin," explained Mark.

According to Tzeporah Berman, Mark is wrong.

Berman is a researcher for OPIRG — the Ontario Public Interest Research Group — a non-profit, student-run organization that monitors environmental and social justice issues.

"2 4-D is widely used but it is also widely banned," Berman said. She also repudiated the Agent Orange claim.

"Agent Orange consisted of a one-to-one ratio of 2 4-D and 2 4 5-T and health problems have been linked to exposure from both compounds."

According to Berman, the chemical "has been directly related to several serious health defects such as Non-Hodkins Lymphoma, a rare but fatal cancer that affects the Lymph system. It can also cause birth defects and sterility."

Berman also noted the findings of the U.S. MRAK Commission in 1969.

"The commission found that children who had been playing in schoolyards sprayed with 2 4-D, after several days experienced swollen eyes and mouths and had trouble controlling the discharge of urine. They also experienced symptoms of nausea, diarrhoea and limb paralysis."

Kent Groves, a manager with the ChemLawn-EcoLab lawn care company, disagrees with the assertion that 2 4-D is harmful.

"It is one of the safest products for landscape management. People relate it to various cancers but there is no correlation."

According to Berman, Groves' answer is typical of attitudes in the lawn care business. She says there has not been enough research done on 2 4-D to draw such conclusions.

Mark pointed to safety precautions York uses in the application of Killlex.

"We are licensed to do this, and with our application rates and the way it is applied we do not think that we are predisposing the public to any dangers."

Mark also argued that the Ontario signage program — which requires York to put signs on lawns for 24 hours after spraying — prevents people from coming into contact with the chemicals.

Berman countered that 2 4-D stays longer than 24 hours.

"2 4-D has a half life of 24 [hours] which means that after this period one half of the chemical remains on the lawn. Therefore people are still exposed to it. It can also travel throughout the atmosphere to other areas of land and water bodies, which could cause contamination of the water supply."



Black Caucus

Get up • Get into it • Get involved

A black writers' caucus of *Excalibur* has been formed to work toward the promotion of issues and concerns of students of African descent. We're a small but vocal part of the *Excalibur* staff and we need you, your ideas and your input. No previous experience is necessary.

The Black Writers' Caucus will meet every Wednesday at 4:30 beginning July 3. Or come in and speak to Jeannine.

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Help us develop a policy

Excalibur is in the process of developing a policy to aid us in establishing and maintaining a non-discriminatory media. At present we have a draft policy which we hope to adopt and incorporate into our constitution in the fall. We encourage interested members of the York community to come and pick up a copy of the policy. We welcome your suggestions for improvement. A general meeting to discuss the policy will be held in September.

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