

# THE WEED SOCIETY / OF NEW SOUTH WALES

P.O. Box K287, Haymarket, N.S.W., 2000

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## Implications of the New Pesticides Act

Unfortunately the talk which was to be given by Mr. Dale Weedman on the 1st August about the above topic had to be cancelled at the last minute. However some notes about the new act are printed below for information.

## New South Wales Pesticides Act, 1978

The New South Wales Pesticides Act, 1978 was passed by the New South Wales Parliament earlier this year. Regulations are now being written and these should be finalised by the end of the year. Time will then be allowed to register agricultural chemicals under the new Act and to clear old stocks of pesticides and literature. Thus the Act should not become fully operative until late 1979.

## OBJECTS OF THE NEW ACT

The objects of the new Act are to:

1. Provide for the registration of pesticides, the approval of containers (for registered pesticides), and the registration of labels.
2. Control the sale, supply, use and possession of pesticides.
3. Prevent certain foodstuffs containing prohibited pesticide residues from becoming available for consumption or export.

## DEFINITION OF PESTICIDES

"Pesticide" means any substance or organism that is manufactured, represented, sold or used as a means of directly or indirectly -

- (a) Destroying, stupefying, repelling, inhibiting the feeding of, or preventing infestation by or attacks of, any pest;
- (b) Attracting any pest for the purpose of its destruction;
- (c) Destroying vegetation or altering its natural development, productivity, quality or reproductive capacity; or
- (d) Destroying or rendering ineffective, or regulating the effect of a fungus or any other parasitic vegetation, bacteria or a virus on or in:
  - (i) any substance other than a manufactured food or beverage; or
  - (ii) any form of life except where it is in livestock or on or in man,

and any substance or organism specified or described and declared to be a pesticide in an order published in the Government Gazette, but does not include - ....2/.

- (e) A substance or organism that is represented as being for use and is used for internal administration to animals; or
- (f) (notwithstanding paragraph (c)) A substance that is represented as being for use and is used:
  - (i) solely as a fertiliser; or
  - (ii) as a means for remedying or assisting to remedy any imbalance in soil or any other matter in which vegetation is grown.

#### APPROVALS OTHER THAN REGISTRATION

In addition to granting normal registration, the Registrar of Pesticides may allow research/manufacture/sale/use under categories of:- Permits, Pesticide Orders, Restricted Pesticides.

##### Permits

A permit may be issued, subject to specified conditions, to allow a person to do any of the following:

1. Sell or supply an unregistered pesticide.
2. Have in possession an unregistered pesticide.
3. Prepare for use, and use, an unregistered pesticide.
4. Make a claim for use of a pesticide which is not included on the registered label.

##### Pesticide Orders

A pesticide order has basically the same function as a permit and can be issued for the same purposes. The difference is that the details of a pesticide order will be published in the Government Gazette, whereas a permit must be issued to an individual. A pesticide order will be issued where there is a widespread need for use of an unregistered pesticide and it would be impractical to issue individual permits. An example of such a situation would be the occurrence of a widespread outbreak of an exotic pest and where no registered pesticide was available.

##### Restricted Pesticides

Where stringent control of use of an individual pesticide is necessary, that pesticide may be prescribed as a "restricted pesticide". A person may apply to the Registrar of Pesticides for a certificate to allow him to use the restricted pesticide. Such a certificate will specify the terms and conditions under which the pesticide may be used. Before issuing a certificate, the Registrar of Pesticides may, where considered necessary, require the applicant to undergo a test of competency to use the pesticide.

#### RESEARCH WITH PESTICIDES

A Permit will be needed to obtain, have in possession and use an unregistered pesticide, or to use a registered pesticide in a manner other than as indicated on the registered label. Applications for Permits for legitimate research purposes will be straightforward.

#### TECHNICAL INFORMATION

It is an offence under the Act to disseminate misleading information about a pesticide. A person, when giving information about or commenting on, a pesticide must not contradict the directions for use or instructions shown on the registered label. Similarly, a person must not make a claim for use of a pesticide that is not shown on the registered label.

With some sales of pesticides, a pamphlet, which is not part of the label, is

intended to accompany the product on sale. Whilst this pamphlet is strictly an "advertisement" it is intended to be treated as part of the label so that the Registrar can exercise control over it. The reason for this is that the pamphlet can contain instructions for use. Under the Act, such a pamphlet will have to be registered as a label.

Permits will be issued to cover emergency situations where suitable registered labels do not exist.

#### PRESCRIBED RESIDUES IN FOODSTUFFS

The new legislation will permit the seizure or placing in "quarantine" of certain crops at farm level where these crops are residue affected as defined under the new Act. The Act gives powers to authorised inspectors to enable them to exercise control over certain foodstuffs containing unacceptable residues of pesticides.

Action can only be taken on a foodstuff where a maximum residue level of pesticides has been prescribed for that particular foodstuff.

In the Act reference to "foodstuff" means any vegetation or produce that is capable of being used for food by man or livestock. The term includes the produce of any living animal (for example, milk). Manufactured foods are excluded.

#### NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

##### STATEMENT ON 2,4,5-T

The National Health and Medical Research Council today released details of their review of the present position on the health aspects of the herbicides commonly known as 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D.

Confusion obviously exists over three substances, the herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T and the trace contaminant of 2,4,5-T known as TCDD or dioxin.

The systemic herbicides 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are derivatives of phenoxyacetic acid, and were developed during the 1940's. They have been widely used since that time in the selective control of certain unwanted species of plant life.

2,4,5-T is used for the control of brush and woody species on pasture land, roads, forestry plantations and to a lesser extent in sugar cane. 2,4-D is widely used for the weeding of cereal and other crops as it is more effective than 2,4,5-T against non-woody broadleaf plants. The two may be used together.

Approximately 2000 tonnes of 2,4-D and 250 to 300 tonnes of 2,4,5-T are used in Australia each year.

During the manufacture of 2,4,5-T traces of TCDD, a highly toxic substance, may be formed. Fundamental differences in the processes used to manufacture 2,4-D preclude the formation of any TCDD.

The use of 2,4-D is not producing any risk to human health. There is no evidence that it is linked to human birth defects.

There have been frequent allegations relating 2,4,5-T to birth deformities in humans whenever a "cluster" of congenital abnormalities has been reported. Council has reviewed the data on these chemicals and the various investigations into links between their use and the causation of human birth defects. The most widely publicised being those allegations of birth deformities among humans and animals associated with the use of "agent orange" as a defoliant during military operations in Vietnam.

Special studies examined were those done by the United States National Academy of Sciences (Vietnam), the New Zealand Department of Health, the Victorian Department of Health (Yarram area), the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine (NSW).

A thorough investigation of the Vietnam situation conducted by the United States National Academy of Sciences showed no conclusive evidence of any association between exposure to herbicides and birth defects in humans.

In New Zealand, similar allegations were investigated by the Department of Health in 1977. Examination of available data showed there was no evidence to implicate 2,4,5-T as a causal factor in human birth defects.

More recently allegations associating herbicides with human birth deformities have been made in Australia, particularly in the Yarram district of Victoria and in the Cairns district of Queensland. Investigations in Victoria have not established any causal relationship between 2,4,5-T and birth deformities, nor have the claims relating to the Cairns area been substantiated.

Adverse effects may be produced in certain species of animals by administering large doses of 2,4,5-T containing various levels of TCDD.

Great difficulty arises however when attempts are made to relate the results of experiments, usually involving very high dosage rates, in such animals as rats and mice, to humans in the real life situation.

Should the use of 2,4,5-T be prohibited, the need for such an agent would lead to some other chemical being used. Such replacement, especially if there has been little experience in its use, may present greater hazards than those ascribed to 2,4,5-T.

Council, having completed its examination of data, unanimously agreed that it could find no substantiated scientific evidence of a causal link between the use of 2,4,5-T and human birth defects.

Council states:

In the light of present knowledge there is no reason to place any additional restrictions on the use of 2,4,5-T.

In its review, Council noted that minute amounts of TCDD are formed during the synthesis of 2,4,5-T.

TCDD is a toxic synthetic organic chemical. Although it has not been possible so far to eliminate this contaminant entirely, present production methods are able to reduce the TCDD level to less than 0.1PPM, which is within recognised safety levels.

Council recommends that the manufacturers give attention to the further reduction of the already low levels of TCDD in herbicides, with the aim of eliminating its release into the environment.

Adelaide, 16 June 1978

#### New Members

Mr. P.G. Lawry, Narrabri  
Mr. C.A. Willmot, Moree  
Mr. B.D. Scarsbrick, Orange  
Miss Deirdre Lemerle, University of Sydney  
Chemical Industries, (Kwinana) Pty. Ltd., Enfield.

Last reminder about the Logo competition. All entries need to be with the Secretary, The Weed Society of N.S.W. P.O. Box K287, Haymarket, N.S.W. 2000 by the end of October.

#### Recent Publications on Pesticide Safety

- Apply Pesticides Correctly, A Guide for Commercial Applicators.

Available at US \$1.60 per copy from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402, U. S. A.

- Pesticide Users Guide - Contact Agricultural Chemicals Coordinator, Colorado State University, Fort Collins CO 89523, U.S.A.

- Pesticide Manual - Contact the Agricultural Extension Service, Plant Science Division, University of Wyoming, Laramie WY 82071, U.S.A.
- Pesticide Manual Part I. - Available for US \$3 per copy from UC/AID Pest Management Group, 2288 Fulton Street, Suite 310, Berkeley, CA 94704, U.S.A.

Review of "The Worlds Worst Weeds" by Holm, Plucknett, Pancho and Herberger (1977) Published by East-West Centre (Univ. Hawaii Press) US \$35.00

To a plant physiologist, the step from studying simple processes in single organs or organisms to explaining and manipulating the performance of field crops involves a daunting escalation of complexity. The result is that very often, the field crop studied is "ideal", in the sense that common agronomic attributes are optimized, for example, weeds are completely excluded from the crop.

To the physiologist who wishes to bridge the gap between this ideal crop and a realistic one, these other normal agronomic events, such as weed infestation, offer new and mostly unwelcome and poorly understood problems. This new book can be appreciated then as an exceedingly useful reference volume to such workers. For instance, I was pleased to find (at last), a substantial section on the effect of time of germination on the growth of Echinochloa crus-galli, a problem which was important, but not central to another agronomic investigation.

Besides offering such specific information, this compendium allows agronomists and other researchers who would not normally be well-versed in weed science to easily inform themselves in detail about specific crops and then associated weed problems. As this is in a global sense, obviously some fine detail is missing, such as the recognition of Lolium rigidum and other species as important weeds of the southern Australian wheatbelt. However, this is the sort of local information which can be readily found by the researchers most involved with this problem. In summary, then, I found this to be a most informative and well presented volume.

(Dr.) B.G. Sutton  
(Lecturer in Plant Physiology - Univ.  
of Sydney).

News of Members and Recent Appointments  
in the Weed Area

- Dick Medd with the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, Orange has had his Ph.D. confirmed by the University of New England. (Congratulations Dick).
- Katrina Slack has retired from the Department of Agriculture to take up home duties and is now living at Dareton where her husband is a fruit Officer.
- Peter Gray (Dubbo) and Chris Evans (Orange) have recently been appointed Field Officers (Weeds) to work with local councils on Noxious Weeds.

Asian Pacific Weed Science Society Conference

The organisers have received approximately 100 intentions to submit papers and instructions to intending authors will be issued in October this year.

Abstracts of papers are to be submitted by the end of January, 1979. Everyone who is able is urged to submit a paper. The organizing Committee are hopeful of coming up with an initial programme early in the New Year.

Bulletin on Weed Distribution

A recent technical Bulletin No. 18, titled "Assessing the Area and Distribution of Serrated Tussock, St. John's Wort and Sifton Bush in N.S.W.", is available from M.H. Campbell, Agricultural Research Centre, Orange. The bulletin is the result of a survey on the area distribution of weeds in N.S.W., on the number of properties infested with serrated tussock, on the number of landholders having difficulty controlling the weed, on reasons for the difficulty and on types of land areas infested. Maps have been prepared of the areas infested by each weed.

FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT

The V International Symposium on Biological Control of Weeds will be held in Brisbane, Australia in 1980 from Tuesday July 22 until Tuesday July 29. Hopefully many researchers will be able to attend this Symposium before attending the International Congress of Entomology which is being held in Japan, August 3 to 9.

We expect to secure the Bardon Professional Development Centre as the venue for the Symposium. The Centre is a modern, recently constructed complex in a most attractive setting in a suburb of Brisbane. We feel sure you will be delighted with the Centre and the facilities which it has to offer. Cost will be reasonable.

For further information contact Dr. K.L.S. Harley.  
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