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From: Steven Palmer [mailto:shpalmer@maine.rr.com]  
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2009 3:15 PM  
To: Meredith Strang Burgess; swaustin@maine.rr.com  
Cc: Fish, Gary  
Subject: Retail Pesticides

Representative Burgess and Representative Austin:

For a number of years- over 15, I have questioned the need or wisdom of having pesticide products so easily available to the general public. I do not know the numbers of products sold at the retail level nor the volume purchased of such products here in the state, but I have to believe the number is most likely pretty staggering.

These chemicals either sit on the soil, run off into our watersheds, pollute the air through the gases they emit and sit on the shelves and garages of I am sure many homes throughout our state. I would venture to say firefighters often run into the issue of volatile chemicals being discharged in household fires and as such remains a constant source of worry and threat to those who volunteer to keep the public safe. One might wonder how many children accidentally are exposed to these same chemicals.

Inasmuch as these chemicals represent a threat to our environment and safety to many, would it not make sense to prohibit the sale of these products within our state at the retail level? I am not opposed to the use of these chemicals as there are many reasons these registered pesticides need to be available to people trained to apply them- greenhouse operators, farmers, dairy farmers, orchardists, etc. These people are required to have at minimum some training to purchase and apply these chemicals. They are taught the prudent use of these chemicals and are taught the alternatives which can be available to the old scenario of grabbing a pesticide first and asking questions later.

Much has changed in the landscape over the past 20 years for the professionally licensed applicators across our country, but little has changed for the public in general. I do know that today's citizen is much wiser about asking questions when using pesticide products and in being concerned for the environment. However, even with the increased sensitivity among more people to our environment-air and water and food sources, why is it necessary to allow so many chemicals to be so easily and readily available to the general consumer? I contend that the time has come to seriously examine the appropriateness of allowing the pesticides which are on many retail shelves in this state to continue to be available to the public.

In all my years of performing landscape services I have never run into serious incidences of insects or fungi in the open environment which required an assault by deadly force through chemicals. If such a need is warranted to deal with a problem of a pressing magnitude, then there are professionals to call to get the job done correctly. I am not saying there would not be objections when Weed Be Gone, Sevin or Round-Up is removed from the shelf, but we all share in the environment and it is incumbent on us all to look around and see what we have habitually done which could be changed to improve our management of our air, water and soil. And with the huge uptick in organic choices or "safe" products to combat insects, etc. it seems the public may be ready to easily accept such a change in the inaccessibility to lawn and garden chemicals.

In Canada there has been a strong move to curtail the sale of pesticides at the retail level. This is being done now. Could it be that Maine makes this same move?

This is not an easy subject with over 10,000 registered chemicals for sale in this state. Pesticides is a broad category but this fact should not dissuade us from starting to look

at this issue. I believe the Board of Pesticides Control at the Department of Agriculture would be helpful with statistics that could shed more light on this subject.

I would stick my neck out here and offer what I can to pursue this. I would however like to know your sense of this issue and where you might fall in proposing such legislation?

Sincerely,

Steven Palmer  
Plainview Farm  
North Yarmouth