



Report **04.677**
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Committee **Rural Services and Wairarapa**
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Pesticides Residues in Rural Areas

1. Purpose

To inform the Committee about the issue of pesticide residue in rural soils and its implications for changing land use.

2. Background

In February 2002 the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) released a report titled *Pesticide Residues in Horticultural Soils in the Auckland Region*. The report indicated that the historic use of pesticides on horticultural properties has resulted in levels of contaminants in soils comparatively elevated above background concentrations. Other reports have shown that former sheep dips sites also have elevated levels of contaminants. The contaminants most frequently detected in both instances are arsenic, DDT, dieldrin, copper, lead, aldrin and BHC.

As a result of the reports, the Ministry for the Environments (MfE) sent a memo to local authorities recommending that before approving a residential or life-style subdivision on horticultural and agricultural land, Councils require the evaluation of soil test data, if the history of land use indicates that contamination may be possible.

MfE also established an interagency programme in conjunction with ARC. They are working toward producing guidance notes on the assessment and management of land involving past horticultural and agricultural land use. Despite these central governments initiatives there has been little, if any, direction for councils on how to address the issue.

In the absence of central government guidance, the Policy and Planning team in the Wairarapa Division established an informal process to address the issue of changing land use on horticultural soils. Outside of the Wairarapa, the Territorial Authorities liase directly with the Contamination and Land Scientist.

3. How does Greater Wellington deal with pesticides in rural areas?

3.1 Horticultural Sites

When applications are received by Masterton District Council, South Wairarapa District Council or Carterton District Council for a change in land use or subdivision in the rural area, the majority of them are forwarded to Greater Wellington. This allows Greater Wellington the opportunity to provide comments or to make a submission. If there is a possibility that the property may be contaminated, i.e. through analysis of past and present land use, Greater Wellington recommends that the applicant be requested to undertake an assessment of contamination in accordance with the Ministry for the Environment Contaminated Land Management Guidelines.

Greater Wellington also requests that the results of any assessment and soil sampling be submitted to both Greater Wellington so the Selected Land Use Register can be updated; and to the appropriate District Council so they can determine whether the site is suitable for the proposed use. On the 3 November 2004, the Wairarapa Times Age reported on the subdivision of a former market garden, which had at the request of Greater Wellington been tested for pesticide residues and was cleared by the Masterton District Council Environmental Officer. This is an example of the current process in action and working.

3.2 Sheep Dip Sites

Greater Wellington recently employed consultants to locate sheep dips in selected areas within Wellington and Porirua Cities. The study indicated that there is potential for a large number of sheep dips to exist in the Region and that identifying the location of all these sites will be extremely difficult and potentially expensive. Methods of identification would include studying of, aerial photographs, interviews and field checking.

While former sheep dips sites in the rural environment are potentially a risk to human and environmental health the locality and extent of the majority of the sites remain unknown. However, in the situation where there is a known sheep dip site, Greater Wellington recommends that a site investigation be undertaken to determine whether or not the site is appropriate for the proposed land use.

4. Future

The New Zealand Waste Strategy sets targets for contaminated sites that aim to ensure identification of all contaminated sites and management of those that are high risk by 2015. To assist with this process the MfE are compiling guidelines which are likely to be released early next year to address the issue of pesticides in horticultural soils and sheep dip sites.

5. Recommendation

That the Committee notes the contents of this report.

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