

What is a Pesticide?

“Pesticide” is an overarching term that describes a substance used to control pests, such as weeds, insects, diseases or rodents.

Pesticides are carefully and effectively used to protect public health; in drinking water, food crops, swimming pools and restaurants. We also use pesticides on ourselves to control insects such as lice and mosquitoes, and on our pets for protection against disease-carrying fleas and ticks.

Some of the pesticides that Health Canada approves for use in the garden include:

- Herbicides for weed infestations
- Insecticides for insect infestations
- Fungicides for fungal disease infestations

What are ‘cosmetic’ pesticides?

There’s no such product as a ‘cosmetic’ pesticide. Despite this term being used in the media and by some special interest groups, no pesticides are officially classified using the term ‘cosmetic.’

All lawn & garden pesticides are assessed and approved by Health Canada for specific uses, and are intended to help keep our greenspaces in a healthy and safe condition.



Canada's Pest Control Products Act provides for the protection of human health and the environment. It contains some of the world's most comprehensive pesticide legislation.

Healthy turf provides a safe play surface for sport activities, prevents excessive run-off and soil erosion, traps dust and other particles, and provides a cooling effect on hot summer days.

Trees alter the environment in which we live by moderating climate, improving air quality, conserving water, stabilizing the soil and harboring wildlife.

Pesticides are an important tool in maintaining the health and safety of our communities — including public greenspaces and homes in our neighbourhood.

Facts about Lawn & Garden Pesticides



Lawn & Garden Pesticides

Pesticides used in our parks, sports fields and gardens have become the target for creating alarm despite extensive scientific research proving their safety and efficacy. Pesticide use is a hot button for public discussion and some groups are calling for a ban on “cosmetic” pesticides.

Under a ban, homeowners would be unable to use these safe and effective products on their own property; unable to selectively spot-spray invasive weeds before populations get out of control, or to manage insect infestations before extensive damage occurs to trees or garden plants.

Municipal departments caring for public green-space already employ stringent Integrated Pest Management practices, such as the careful and selective application of chemical pest control only when and where other cultural and manual control efforts are unsuccessful in managing pest outbreaks.



Municipalities and provinces under bans or “restricted-use” pesticide bylaws have experienced problems with weed and insect-infested parks, sports fields and playgrounds — a trend that can lead to the spread of pests onto private property, declining use of public greenspaces, and an accompanying drop in residential property values.

Note that only the provincial government has jurisdiction to control the sale of pesticides. Even if a municipality enacts a pesticide use bylaw, products will still be available for sale — legal to purchase, but illegal to use.

The Regulation of Pesticides in Canada



The *Pest Control Products Act* governs how pesticides are regulated in Canada.

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) is responsible

for the implementation of the *Act*, and the key mandate of this agency is to prevent unacceptable risks to people and the environment from the use of pesticides.

What are some of Health Canada's key Evaluation and Assessment Protocols?

Toxicological Evaluation identifies possible human health effects of pesticides and establishes the levels at which humans can be exposed to the products without any harm. Assessments include toxicity, carcinogenicity, genotoxicity and teratogenicity.

Food Residue Exposure Assessment evaluates every submission where a product could come in contact with food, including field crops, meat and dairy products and processed foods.

Environmental Assessment evaluates data on the environmental chemistry and toxicology of products, as well as their environmental fate.

Health Canada takes into account that children's diets and activities are different from those of adults, and therefore, children's potential exposure to pesticides through food and non-food routes are specifically included in its health assessments.

Scientists also factor in the differences in children's development and metabolism when toxicology tests are assessed.

For more information visit the Health Canada website: www.pmr-arla.gc.ca

The Lawn Herbicide 2,4-D

The most common herbicide used to control broadleaf weeds in turf, such as dandelions, is called 2,4-D. It is found in domestic products with names such as Killlex™.

In May 2008 Health Canada concluded its extensive re-evaluation of the herbicide 2,4-D, finding that it can be used safely according to label directions for a variety of lawn, turf and agricultural applications.

“Health Canada has determined that 2,4-D meets Canada's strict health and safety standards, and as such can continue to be sold and used in Canada.”

The document released by Health Canada also states “The decision on 2,4-D is consistent with that of regulators in [other] countries including the United States, New Zealand and countries of the European Union, as well as the World Health Organization.”

For the complete document visit <http://www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/pdf/infonotes/InfoNote-2,4-D-rvd2008-11-eng.pdf>.



Lawn Care Professionals

Certified Pesticide Applicators in Alberta must undertake extensive study and testing to become licensed.

Many professional lawn care companies also participate in an industry program called Plant Health Care Accreditation. This program requires the lawn care business to comply with a strict Code of Practice and to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Maintaining healthy turf helps it to out-compete invading weeds, so proper watering and fertilization go a long way to keeping weeds at bay. If a chemical control is warranted, professionals will “spot spray” herbicide to target individual weeds rather than treating an entire lawn.

For lawn care information visit Health Canada's *Healthy Lawns* website: www.healthylawns.net