



Oregon
Department
of Agriculture

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INFORMATION OFFICE NEWS RELEASE

Clopyralid levels in compost decrease following restriction on lawn and turf uses of the herbicide

January 19, 2005... A recently concluded study of the herbicide clopyralid in Oregon compost facilities shows a dramatic drop in clopyralid levels – the lowest recorded since the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) placed a statewide restriction of the herbicide's use in lawn and turf applications in July 2003. Samples taken from 11 of 12 compost facilities permitted by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) throughout the state in 2004 show an average drop of 80 percent in clopyralid residual levels since the ODA rule went into effect.

"We feel comfortable that the restriction has significantly reduced clopyralid residuals in compost," said Dale Mitchell, assistant administrator of ODA's Pesticides Division. Mitchell served as a member of a DEQ task force that oversaw the study. ODA plans to continue the rule that restricts clopyralid's use on many lawn and turf applications.

The active ingredient clopyralid kills broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, clover, and thistle. Evidence suggests that compost made with clopyralid-tainted yard debris could harm sensitive flowers and vegetable plants. ODA and DEQ are concerned that clopyralid-containing compost and grass clippings applied to home gardens could harm beans, peas, tomatoes, and other vegetables. The herbicide only affects plant growth and does not pose a human threat.

During the three-year DEQ study, the highest level of clopyralid reported during 2002 tests was 94 parts per billion (ppb). That facility's clopyralid level dropped to only 2.3 ppb in the 2004 test. DEQ tested compost at the facilities four times between June 2002 and October 2004.

"The significant drop in clopyralid in Oregon compost is a good example of government and industry working together," said Matt Stern, manager of NW Greenlands Inc. compost facility and member of the DEQ task force. "The state acted quickly to study the problem when it first surfaced and to restrict its use on lawns. The compost industry fully participated by volunteering to be tested for three years and diligently restricted contaminated feedstock."

When DEQ began permitting compost facilities in 1999, Oregon had 24 facilities composting nearly 314,000 tons annually. In 2003, facilities processed nearly 536,000 tons of organic material. Today there are 44 DEQ-permitted compost facilities.

No additional testing of composting facilities is currently planned.

For more complete information on DEQ's clopyralid study, go to DEQ's Web site at:
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/composting.html>.

For more information, contact ODA's Dale Mitchell at (503) 986-4646 in Salem or Marti Roberts-Pillon of DEQ's Solid Waste Program, Portland, at (503) 229-6738.

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