

# Environmental Health Committee

## Findings & Action Plan

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In 2010 the Chameleons Montessori school community set up an Environmental Health Committee to investigate the possible side effects of exposure to the crop spraying in the surrounding vineyards, specifically with regard to the health of all those at the school. The committee was made up of parents and staff at the school who consulted with various experts on the subject.

Below follows the findings and action plan of the Environmental Health Committee (EHC).

### Findings

- The Nitida wine farm operates under the auspices of the Integrated Production of Wine Scheme (IPW) and as such keep to a rigorous auditing process which ensures that their farming practices are as environmentally friendly as possible.
- All vineyard sprays used on the farm are registered with the IPW.
- Nitida does not spray with Organophosphates.
- Medical Safety Data Sheets for each spray used on the farm are available from the committee.
- In 2010 Prof Leslie London of UCT gave a talk to the school on the subject. Copies of the DVD of Prof London's talk are also available from the committee.
- Ground water testing has been completed by AL Abbot & Associates. The water was tested for phosphates and sulphates. Certification was given to Nitida on 22 April 2010. The results of the test are available from the school.
- Drinking water (municipal) also underwent testing performed by Gerrit Van Wyk of the Dept of Health. Gerrit confirmed that the bacteriological samples taken from the drinking water were within the recommended guidelines for drinking water (<1 E. Coli/ 100ml).
- Cholinesterase testing was initially considered as an option, but based on the fact that organophosphates are not being used, the testing was excluded as an effective option.
- The use of Kitz air revitalizers in each class ensures that the air quality in the classes are maintained. (This is of particular note for days when the children are required to stay in the school for the duration of the spraying). Air quality tests on the product have been supplied and are available on request.
- A barrier of Leylania trees alternated with Eugenias and mock olives has been planted along the length of the school boundary adjacent to the vineyards in 2010. These trees have grown in the last two years to

provide an additional buffer zone.

- Vine Spraying does not occur during the Autumn/Winter season.
- Spraying takes place approximately 8 times per year, for 2-3 days at a time.
- The size of Nitida is 37 hectares of which 16 hectares are under vines.
- Regent is a chemical used to control ant infestation and is sprayed by hand on approximately 300 vines. Ground water testing (as mentioned above) has not been affected.
- Weed spraying occurs on Nitida. Mamba is used as the chemical to control the weed infestation. The Mamba is sprayed directly to the ground, no drift is indicated.
- No aerial spraying takes place on Nitida.

The farmer at Nitida has expressed his willingness to cooperate with the school in order to provide advance warning of vine-spraying and to consider any proposals which the school may have regarding alternative sprays. This process is ongoing.

## **Action Plan**

- The school website is updated with the findings of the EHC and all information will be made accessible to parents, staff and other interested parties.
- The school will issue all new parents with a letter of informed consent on enrolling their children into the school. This letter will ensure that parents are fully aware of the vineyard spraying on the farm.
- The school's Environmental Health Policy will be reviewed to include all the findings and outcomes of the EHC's activities, and the updated policy will be made accessible to parents, staff and other interested parties.
- The EHC has erected a shade cloth barrier at the school as an interim measure until the trees are fully grown.

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