

**From:** Claire Goffe-wood [mailto:Claire@ChameleonsMontessori.co.za]  
**Sent:** Monday, July 11, 2011 18:05  
**To:** info@chameleonsmontessori.co.za  
**Subject:** Environmental Health Update & Carte Blanche

Dear Parents,

### **Environmental Health Update**

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2011, a meeting was held at Nitida, attended by the Head of Environmental Health of the Northern Sub-District, a representative from the Department of Agriculture, the Head Toxicologist at the Tygerberg Poison Unit, a representative from Air Quality Control, Professor Leslie London of UCT, Bernhard Veller of Nitida Wine Farm, Brendon Bailes of the EHC, Wayne Campbell, the school's legal advisor and Emma Medell and Claire Goffe-Wood.

The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the results of the environmental testing received back from UCT as well as discuss the way forward for Chameleons. **ALL FIVE EXPERTS AT THE MEETING FULLY ENDORSED AND COMMENDED THE SCHOOLS POLICY AND THE PROPOSED WAY FORWARD FOR OUR SPECIFIC SITUATION.** We attach for your reference a copy of the meeting minutes drafted by the Department of Health.

The main points from this meeting are as follows:

- It is confirmed that LOW levels of pesticide contamination were found in the school environment, indicating that some spray drift is present. **To clarify what is meant by "low": If you eat an apple from any South African supermarket shelf, the permissible Endosulfan pesticide residue amount on the apple is to be no more than 0,5mg/kg in value. In the grass and dust samples taken from the Chameleons environment, the highest value of Endosulfan found was 0.11mg/kg and the lowest was 0.02mg/kg. This means that the permissible Endosulfan residue amount on an apple from the supermarket is 4.5 times to 25 times greater than that found at Chameleons.**
- Low levels of domestic pesticides were found in the school environment due to domestic pest control in the school.
- Pesticides which **are not** sprayed on Nitida Wine Estate were found to be present in the school environment. Such pesticides include Endosulfan - however the quantity found is within the United States Environmental Protection Agency's standard amount.

***For purposes of clarity, it must be re-iterated: Endosulfan is NOT sprayed on the Nitida Wine Farm or on the vineyards adjacent to the Pre-School. The trace amounts found in the environment are from drift coming to the school from farms in the greater area.***

Based on these findings, the way forward was agreed by all parties present, as follows:

- The Department of Health (Mr Avenant), is to liaise with the IPW with the purpose of educating farmers in the greater Durbanville Valley area about Endosulfan and the other chemicals they use in their farming practice. The IPW is a voluntary environmental sustainability scheme established by the South African Wine Industry which complies with international wine industry environmental sustainability criteria and to which all farms in the AREA surrounding our school are affiliated.

- The Health Department will be looking into recommending alternative domestic products to be used by the school for pest control and cleaning. For information purposes: Currently the school uses Khakibos spray for flea control, Talcum Powder for ant control and coarse salt for sand fleas. The school has on occasion in the past used Frontline on the farm dog, Lottie, who sometimes frequent the campuses. Handy Andy, Sunlight Liquid and Dettol are currently used by the school by way of cleaning detergents. The school remains open to any suggestions made by the Department of Health in this regard.
- It was also agreed that no further sampling is required by the school, however it might be of value to sample after the tree barrier has grown to the extent of forming a proper barrier.
- Given the results, it was agreed by all parties that the 2011 Vine-spraying Policy could be changed so that children NO LONGER need to be re-located from one campus to another during spraying.

The Health Department commended the Chameleons Montessori Environmental Health Committee for their efforts in ensuring that all possible precautions are taken to ensure a safe environment for the school.

### **Carte Blanche**

Since yesterday's broadcast, the school has received an overwhelming number of emails and telephone calls from families both within and outside the Chameleons Community. We are encouraged by the vote of confidence and sentiment of support received for the school and the outrage at the irresponsible manner in which the media have conveyed the issue to the public at large.

In light of the sensational misinformation broadcast in last night's Carte Blanche Program, the Chameleons EHC urges parents to remain focused on the feedback from the results of our independent environmental testing which was not sufficiently (if at all) conveyed in last night's programming. Professor Leslie London of UCT continues to be THE recognised authority on this subject in South Africa and the school's opinions will continue to be based on Professor London's recommendations and those of the prevailing authorities. We will NOT allow ourselves to fall prey to over-zealous reporting and rumour mongering and we ask our families to maintain a similar stance.

Please be assured that the school and the School Environmental Health Committee remain committed to proactively managing the situation and communicating with parents with complete transparency. If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further, please contact Brendon Bailes, Emma or Claire.

Kind Regards

**Brendon Bailes (Chairperson of the EHC), Emma Medell (Principal) & Claire Goffe-wood (School Administrator)**

