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DURBANVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SECTION: NORTHERN SUB-DISTRICT DIRECTORATE: CITY HEALTH

7 September 2010

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: REPORT – SUSPECTED EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN FROM THE CHAMELEON
MONTESSORI SCHOOL TO CHEMICALS OF CROP SPRAYING AT NITIDA FARM,
DURBANVILLE.**

1 Background of complaints

Chameleons Montessori School is situated on Nitida Wine Estate, Tygerberg Road between Durbanville and Richwood.

The school mandated an investigation into this matter after parents raised concerns in 2009.

An official complaint on the matter was telephonically lodged on 07 April 2010 by a parent of one of the children attending the above mentioned school (this learner is no longer at the school).

“The parent alleged that her child got sick as a result of exposure to crop spraying chemicals and also alleged that the chemical spraying process of vineyards is somehow questionable”.

2 Actions/Investigations

No hard evidence could be found to back the claims of the complainant, not by this Office nor the school itself.

A decision was taken to press ahead with the investigation regardless of the lack of evidence as a good public relations exercise on behalf of both the school and the farm, to allay fears or concerns of the parents of the learners.

The first meeting was held in June 2009 between the owner of the school, owner of the farm, City of Cape Town Environmental Health and Mr. Cumming of Croplife SA. After this meeting Provincial Health was contacted for advice and a possible resolution as they have dealt with similar cases in the past.

A second meeting was held on the 22nd of July 2010, with all interested and affected parties (all affected government departments; owners of the farms Nitida and Bloemendal and Chameleons Montessori School).

3 Measures to mitigate possible exposure as agreed at meetings:

- 3.1 A school policy to be drawn up that will address all issues raised. **(Implemented)**
- 3.2 The school to set up an environmental health committee that will seek to address all issues raised on continuous basis. **(Implemented)**
- 3.3 Spraying programme / spraying dates to be made known in advance to the school in order for the school to alert the parents.
- 3.4 The school has approached Dr. London of UCT (School of Public Health) for monitoring and his students will determine the level of contamination/exposure.
- 3.5 The Department of Agriculture to do routine inspections to ensure that only registered chemicals and correct concentrations are used and that they are applied in accordance with the Act.
- 3.6 A 3m high shade cloth screen wall will be erected on the boundary of the Bloemendal Farm and Pre-school.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 City Health will monitor that all the recommendations set out at the meetings in relation to this issue are adhered to and implemented.
- 4.2 Time frames for those recommendations that have not been implemented as yet should be set and circulated by the responsible person/dept. to all affected and interested parties.
- 4.3 Government protocols and procedures with regard to reporting of chemical poisoning cases should be adhered to at all times.
- 4.4 Environmental Health will only investigate new cases that are notified by a clinical or medical practitioner.
- 4.5 All complaints that are related to crop spraying are to be referred to Department of Agriculture.

Contact person: Anton Nothnagel

Contact no.: 021 9489278

5 Conclusion

I would like to once again re-emphasise that due to the lack of hard evidence this matter could not be pursued any further.

It must also be noted that the vineyards are sprayed in specific blocks; each block is sprayed approximately 8 times per annum (in season).

This Office would like to thank all relevant and affected parties for their interest shown and willingness to co-operate in ensuring a safe environment for the children of Chameleon Montessori School.


For EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: CITY HEALTH