



BEYOND PESTICIDES

701 E Street, SE ■ Washington DC 20003
202-543-5450 phone ■ 202-543-4791 fax
info@beyondpesticides.org ■ www.beyondpesticides.org

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Environmental Protection Agency
Public Information and Records Integrity Branch (7502C)
Office of Pesticide Programs
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20460-0001

RE: 2,4-Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid Risk Assessment; **Docket ID No. OPP-2004-0167**
Submitted electronically to opp-docket@epa.gov

We submit the following comments on behalf of:

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights;	Maryland Pesticide Network
Agricultural Resources Center;	Michigan Environmental Council
Alaska Community Action on Toxics;	Minnesota Center for Environmental
Alliance for Healthy Homes;	Advocacy
Beyond Pesticides;	National Center for Environmental Health
Breast Cancer Fund, The;	Strategies, Inc.;
California Safe Schools;	Natural Resources Defense Council;
Californians for Alternatives to Toxics;	New Jersey Environmental Federation;
Cancer Action New York;	New York Public Interest Research Group;
Citizens' Campaign for the Environment;	No Spray Coalition, Nashville;
Citizens' Environmental Coalition;	Northeast Organic Farming Association of
Clean Water Action;	New Jersey
Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides, The;	Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to
Coalition for Environmentally Safe	Pesticides;
Communities.	Pesticide Action Network North America;
Coalition for Health, Environment and Economic	Pesticide Free Zone Campaign
Rights;	Roseland Organic Farms;
Colorado Pesticide Network;	Safer Pest Control Project;
Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice;	Students for Bhopal;
Defenders of Wildlife;	TEDX, Inc. (The Endocrine Disruption
Ecology Center;	Exchange);
Environmental Research Foundation;	Texans for Alternatives to Pesticides;
Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc.;	Toxics Action Center;
Grassroots Coalition;	Washington Toxics Coalition;
Grassroots Environmental Education;	Women's Voices for the Earth;
Informed Choices;	World Wildlife Fund;
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy;	Wyoming Outdoor Council;
Jack B. Richman Environmental Coalition;	(See page 13 to 16 for signatures.)

Our organizations have significant concerns about the EPA human health and ecological risk assessment for 2,4-D. In particular, we request the following of the Agency in these comments:

1. **Toddler Exposure:** EPA is requested to fill the data gap on child exposure, reverse its deviation from typical procedure, provide currently assessed MOE, generate a worst-case risk assessment not using a 7 day average.
2. **Aggregate Exposure:** EPA is requested to complete an assessment for toddlers/children.
3. **The Rat As Predictor of Toxicity to Humans:** EPA is requested to use intermediate approach between the rat and dog and not to choose an exceptionally insensitive species (rat) on which to base the human health risk assessment.
4. **Farmworker and Farmworker Children Assessments:** EPA is requested to either restrict usage to only those crops where hand labor is not employed, or address the problems with the 8-hour work day assumption, and perform additional dermal risk to farmworkers.
5. **Occupational/Residential Dermal Absorption:** EPA is requested to consider range of results of Moody et al 2002 study, and require not recommend additional mitigations.
6. **Cumulative Risk Assessment:** EPA is requested to consider common modes of toxicity of phenoxy herbicides contained in 2,4-D product formulations.
7. **Weed and Feed Products:** EPA is requested to cancel all registered uses of these products.
8. **Ecological Risk Assessment:** EPA is requested to propose risk mitigation measures for identified ecological risks to birds and mammals, particularly for granular products such as the cancellation of all registered uses of weed and feed products.
9. **Dioxins:** EPA is requested to withhold reregistration until all risk of dioxin production and exposure is removed.
10. **Data Gaps:** EPA is requested to withhold reregistration until all data gaps and forthcoming information are received, assessed, and open for public comment.
11. **Carcinogenicity:** EPA is requested to use the weight of evidence and classify 2,4-D as a Class C 'possible human carcinogen.'

Toddler Exposure

In this phase of the risk assessment process, EPA has stated that:

“The 2,4-D risk assessment team decided that the previous approach would greatly overestimate the short term toddler risk because the short term endpoint was based upon maternal effects that would only occur after several days of exposure.” (P. 35 OPP-2004-0167-0004.)

EPA should not deviate from its standard practice just to make the numbers work out favorably to the reregistration of 2,4-D. If standard or *typical* practice is to use the short term endpoint

along with the maximum Turf Transferable Residue (TTR) value to assess short term risk for toddlers playing on treated turf, then this should not be changed simply because the MOE is unfavorable to the registrant(s). The very reason for using the maximum TTRs with a short-term endpoint was to make up for a lack of data.

The Agency should call this what it is: a serious data gap on acute and short-term exposure data relevant to children and a deficiency in EPA's data on the short-term health effects relevant to children. It appears the Agency is trying to cobble together a proxy for this data gap by using effects in the adult (maternal) that it claims would not occur with shorter-term exposure. Further, EPA justifies not calculating the acute risks for toddlers using the more protective acute NOEAL of 67mg/kg/day because the maximum TTR rate was used rather than considering how it may decrease through dissipation, which would lead to a lower TTR. We request the Agency provide the calculations that show that the trade-off is justified.

It appears to us that the short-term toddler risk may in fact be underestimated because of the use of an adult maternal endpoint and the averaging of TTRs over 7 days. Using the adult maternal endpoint with maximum TTRs the Agency found a corresponding toddler exposure of MOE 1000. To now say that the adult maternal effects based on several days of exposure is MORE representative of toddler exposure has an inadequate basis. Studies have repeatedly shown that child exposure is among the highest exposure possible, not only in terms of the intake of the chemical through various pathways due to proximity to the ground, breathing zone, hand to mouth behavior, and patterns of play but also in terms of proportional impact of that exposure relative to body weight. Children's developing organ systems are more vulnerable and less able to detoxify toxic chemicals.¹

On the whole, the Agency's reasoning for adjusting acute and short-term exposure for children from turf treated with 2,4-D is quite confounding. At this stage, the Agency should be discussing mitigation measures to lower children's exposure and risk (MOE 1000 sits too far on the edge of acceptability), rather than changing its practice of using maximum TTRs and "rerunning the numbers," or more accurately, explaining away the previous numbers.

On this we ask the Agency:

1. By how much does the Agency think the approach overestimated risk?
2. What is the current MOE for toddlers? Under Section 4.4.2.3 of the revised HED risk assessment (OPP-2004-0167-0080) the Agency states that toddler exposure is overestimated but does not reconfigure the MOE. How can an accurate assessment be made for aggregate exposure including dietary and water?
3. What is the aggregate exposure for children?
4. What data does the Agency have to assume that granular formulations would result in less or equal exposure, compared to liquid formulations?
5. The rat developmental study showed effects after several days of exposure. Based on that the Agency is averaging a 7-day exposure scenario. How does the Agency come to the conclusion that using an average of 7 days (versus a median, for example) is comparable to several (i.e. at least 3) days exposure for protecting children? By averaging over 7 days, the peak exposure is eliminated.

We also request the Agency:

6. Acknowledge the lack of a relevant short-term study for the infant and issue a data call-in for such a study that could help to shed light on this important exposure scenario.
7. Generate a worst-case risk assessment in which the exposure is not averaged over a week, but is instead compared to the 25 NOAEL.

Aggregate Exposure

Previous comments by Beyond Pesticides, et al. criticized the Agency for neglecting to include in the aggregate risk assessment other important areas of exposure from air drift, migration of contaminated soil, indoor air exposures from residential use, and “take home” exposures from agricultural uses. The Agency's response that, “The resulting maximum doses (assuming a toddler body weight of 15 kg) from these [indoor air from treated turf] exposures are 0.00067 mg/kg/day for floor contact, 0.002 mg/day for table top contact and 0.00045 mg/kg/day for floor dust ingestion. Comparison of these doses with the short-term endpoint of 25 mg/kg/day for decreased bodyweight gain yields MOEs that range from 12,500 to 56,000” is erroneous. The Agency appeared to misunderstand the point. Beyond Pesticides et al's request is that these additional mg/kg/day exposures as well as the other exposures be calculated not on their own in comparison with the short-term endpoint but rather in the aggregate exposure risk assessment. There appears to be no mechanism for degradation when the residues are dry and away from soil microbes in homes where 2,4-D is tracked in.

In Phase 4 of 6 of the risk assessment process HED conceded that it would not do an aggregate exposure on toddlers since exposure to treated lawns found MOE 1000 and therefore any additional dietary and water exposure would clearly be of concern to the Agency. Now that the Agency claims the MOE was overestimated (although it fails to give the new MOE), it does not appear the Agency completed an aggregate exposure that includes dietary and water. We demand the Agency calculate the numbers and not proceed with the reregistration of 2,4-D based on weak verbal assumptions on the risk and exposure.

The Rat As Predictor of Toxicity to Humans

In discussing the issue of assessing human health risk on the basis of rodent studies and not on the toxicity of 2,4-D in dogs, the Agency states:

“While there is definitely substantial evidence that the dog has a lower clearance capacity for organic acids than what is predicted using allometric scaling, although the mechanism to explain the difference is not clear, it is not considered an unique, species-specific, mechanism and therefore, the data on the dog cannot be ruled out. However, the difference in the elimination pattern among dogs and other mammalian species persuaded HIARC that the rat was a better predictor than the dog of the potential toxicity of 2,4-D to man.” (OPP-2004-0167-0023.)

In this explanation, the Agency simply defers to HIARC without further explanation and ignores the fact that the rat is NOT an accurate representation of elimination patterns in humans. In previous comments submitted by Beyond Pesticides, et al. we state, “...although the half-life of 2,4-D is 8-fold longer in the dog than in the human, it is also 12-fold longer in the human than in

the rat. Therefore the human would be expected to be intermediate in susceptibility between the rat and the dog. There are several ways that EPA could account for this problem, but simply assuming that the human is like the rat is not a scientifically-defensible option.” This argument was ignored and sidestepped by the Agency. Humans appear to be more sensitive than rats, albeit less sensitive than dogs. EPA is choosing an exceptionally insensitive species on which to base the assessment.

We acknowledge that there are data showing that dogs appear to excrete 2,4-D slowly, and that the longer plasma half-life of 2,4-D in dogs is likely to partly or largely explain the increased toxicity observed in this species. However, we do not believe that the data support the contention that the human resembles the rat. The table below summarizes the plasma half-life of 2,4-D in the rat, the human, and the dog.

Species	2,4-D half-life in plasma (hours)	MCPA half-life in plasma (hours)
Rat	1	6
Human	12	11
Dog	96	63

Source: Timchalk C. Toxicology 200:1-19, 2004

Further, an important recently published finding of the rat genome showed that rats have detoxification mechanisms that do not exist in people, augmenting the argument that rats are less than ideal animals to model human toxicity.² (See Appendix 2.)

We advocate using the dog data because doing so is more precautionary and would help protect vulnerable members of the human population from 2,4-D. Alternatively, EPA could select as a NOAEL a number intermediate between the NOAEL found in the dog studies and that found in the rat studies. Such an intermediate NOAEL could be justified based on the evidence that the human is likely to be intermediate in susceptibility between the rat and the dog.

Farm worker and Farm worker Children Assessments

We are pleased with the Agency’s decision to require all wettable powder formulations be packaged in water-soluble bags. We question why the Agency did not respond to the request that the Agency require all liquid formulations to be restricted to applications only when use of adequate PPE can be assured-i.e. when weather conditions and/or lack of access to adequate PPE are not realistic barriers, and request the Agency to please also address this additional concern.

8-hour Farm Worker Work Day Assumption. In pages 3-5 of HED Responses to public comments (OPP-2004-0167-0090), the Agency refers to two recent biomonitoring studies. These studies contain important information but are inadequate to support EPA’s conclusions. MOEs calculated from the Farm Family Exposure Study are four-day averages and do NOT represent peak acute exposures. The Agricultural Health Study included analyses of applicators’ urine before, one day after and three days after application. The very small number of children (n-9) analyzed, however, provided post application samples two days after application. There was apparently no immediate post-application analysis – again an omission of the peak exposure period.

On page 5, EPA responds to Beyond Pesticides, et al. criticism about the underlying assumption of an 8-hour work day by suggesting that “are primarily made to crops” that do “not involve much hand labor.” However, this means that 2,4-D is and can be used on some crops that do employ field workers. Therefore, EPA should either restrict usage to only those crops where hand labor is not employed, or address the problems with the 8-hour work day assumption.

According to the National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS), conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, the majority of farmworkers (56%) worked on average between 30 and 50 hours per week (in 1997-98); and 15% worked an average of more than 50 hours per week.³ This study showed that many agricultural workers work 10 to 12 hour shifts. Interestingly, however, in its recent amendment to the Worker Protection Standard, in response to a grower request, EPA has chosen to allow the use of the glove liners for 10 hours per day, on the grounds that farmworkers work 10 hour shifts and need the glove liners for their entire workday. 69 Fed.Reg. 53,341 (Sept. 1, 2004). Having elected to use a 10-hour workday for farmworkers in one regulatory context, EPA can hardly justify using an 8 hour workday in this area. Indeed, if there is any basis for making such a distinction, EPA has not identified it.

While EPA has divided its analysis of worker exposure into handler and post-application exposures, it has failed to take into account exposures through drift to workers in adjacent fields (which may or may not involve label violations). Thus, in fully evaluating worker exposures, whether the pesticide is used on grain crops or hand labor crops such as sweet corn, EPA must fully evaluate the risks of exposure to workers laboring in nearby fields through drift. We expect to hold the Agency to its promise that, “Any changes to exposure assessment procedures that come out of this review of NRDC’s objections [to various tolerance actions] will be considered as EPA completes the 2,4-D RED” (p. 6).

Dermal absorption. In page 7 of HED Responses to public comments (OPP-2004-0167-0090) EPA responds to the criticism of the Agency’s use of the dermal absorption rate of 5.8% because it did not take into account the possibility that individuals may also use sunscreens, repellents or occlusion that increase rates of dermal absorption by stating that field workers “most likely would not be using these potential enhancer product.” Yet the Agency fails to give any reference to sources from which that assumption is made.

EPA has underestimated the extent to which workers absorb 2,4-D. Notwithstanding EPA’s sweeping assertion to the contrary, it is quite likely that *some* of the nation’s 2.5 million hired farmworkers do use sunscreen and/or insect repellent while working with or around 2,4-D. Thus these aids to absorption must be considered. Moreover, in the vast majority of instances, workers will be exposed to 2,4-D when they are sweating, due to the physical exertion required to carry out their tasks, and their skin is hot. As such, they are likely to absorb more of the pesticide than the laboratory rats, because absorption is greater when the skin is wet and when blood vessels close to the surface are expanded.

EPA’s acknowledgement of concern about dermal exposure is not adequately mitigated by the “recommendation” that workers wash hands frequently and use chemical resistant gloves. If gloves would provide significant protection for pesticide handlers, they must be required because

otherwise they will not be provided. Generally, if gloves are needed because of exposure to post-application workers, restricted entry intervals should be increased because workers harvesting crops on a piece rate cannot do their jobs effectively wearing gloves. In addition, while handwashing facilities are sometimes available, dermal exposure cannot be fully eliminated in the absence of showering and change of clothes facilities. Such facilities should also be required here, in light of the evidence that 2,4-D may pose a cancer risk to workers.

Occupational/Residential Dermal Absorption

Regarding data from the literature on 2,4-D exposure with and without DEET, the Agency discards the findings of the Moody *et al.*, (1992) study (OPP-2004-0167-0090 p. 5) because of large standard deviations. If the only purpose of statistical analysis is to identify and compare population means, then this approach is correct. However, analyses of human exposure should also take into consideration the range of results, which illustrates variability within a population—an important consideration in assuring that protective measures are inclusive of all potentially exposed individuals. Therefore the dismissal of the findings is inappropriate.

In addressing the dermal absorption of infants and children, Beyond Pesticides, et al. did not claim, as EPA suggested, that infant skin is more permeable (although it may be). However, we did point out that other factors may be very important and have not been considered. Such factors include relative ratios of skin area to body mass and the effect of saliva-moistened hands on pesticide absorption.

We agree with EPA that improved labeling of sunscreen, DEET, etc. to inform consumers of such products that their use may enhance the dermal absorption of various substances including pesticides. Unfortunately, EPA does not have the regulatory authority to require such labeling for sunscreens. EPA does, however have the regulatory authority to require label changes on pesticides. Using the same argument, we would then expect to see pesticide labels carry a similar message—that the hazards of dermal exposure to the pesticide may be increased if exposed individuals simultaneously use products containing 2,4-D.

Cumulative Risk Assessment

In pages 13 of HED Responses to public comments (OPP-2004-0167-0090) EPA justifies the dismissal of cumulative risk assessment for various phenoxy herbicides based on the statement that “HED has no data indicating that they have a common mode of toxic action.” HED has not demonstrated that there are data that indicate that there is *no* common mode of action. Rather, they only cite that they have no such data. Lack of data cannot be used as data showing no common mode of toxic action. In our previous comments we provide evidence that at the very least lend reason to believe these chemicals have a common mode of toxicity and therefore should warrant a review by the Agency.

The similarity in chemical structures for the compounds listed below is sufficient to warrant regulatory treatment as a group.

Common name(s)	Technical name
2,4-D	2,4-dichlorophenoxy acetic acid

