The Silent Destroyer Essay, Research Paper

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The Silent Destroyer

America the Beautiful! So why are we destroying it everyday with the use of pesticides? It has been proven that pesticides have affects on it’s surrounding, although made to improve earths resources, they typically take there negative effect on the environment in time. Pesticides affect more than the environment; they also affect the animals and humans living in the environment. There are alternative, to this major problem but, we as the caretakers of earth must act fast. In the following paper I’m going to share with you what pesticides are. I’ll tell you why they are not safe to use and some of the affects of pesticides. Last, I will talk about some new alternatives there are instead of using pesticides.

Pesticides are toxic chemicals that poison the earth and its environment. Pesticides main use is to kill pests that destroy food crops. They are also used in forests, lakes, city parks, lawns, hospitals, schools, and homes. There are five types of pesticides; insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides. Insecticides kill insects, herbicides manage weeds, fungicides control mold and mildew, and rodenticides kill rodents. Pesticides are also found in a large range of products from shampoo to paper. “Pesticides may be found wherever we live and work, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, and in the food we eat”(Mott & Snyder 5).

Why are pesticides not safe to use, and what are there affects? Pesticides have many affects on the world today. Pesticides affect the environment in two different ways, It affects the water we drink and the soils we plant our crops in. Pesticides also affect the food we eat. Not only can pesticides be detected in food they are also found in humans and animals. So why are we moving so slowly to fix the problem?

Everyday pesticides are dumped into our environment. Over time most of the pesticides make thier way to a source of water, whether it’s groundwater or a body of water. According to Lewis Regenstein author of “America the Poisoned” two thirds of the nation’s lakes have serious pollution problems. 80% of 3,700 urban lakes in the United States are destroyed. More than 94 million residents could use these lakes for recreational use or for a source of water (169). Cincinnati’s drinking water contains about 700 chemicals. 90% of them did not exist 20 years ago. The main sources of most of these chemical pollutants are municipal sewage, industrial discharges, and runoffs from farming areas. There are also several other chemicals in America’s drinking water. Although hazardous, there are approximately 60 chemicals that are mixed into water in the process of treating it. Unlike rivers or lakes, underground supplies are not processed at treatment plants before being used by humans. “More than one hundred million of our citizens depend in a whole or in part on underground as sources of drinking water (Beck qtd. in Regenstein 172). Once groundwater becomes contaminated, there is usually no way to clean it.

Pesticides also have a great affect on the food we consume. Food is one of the great necessities of life. Yet, a growing amount of evidence indicates that the food supply is being contaminated with pesticides (Mott & Snyder vii). These pesticides are most commonly sprayed on the plants in which the fruit or vegetables grow while they are young. Many of them receive several treatments, depending on the problem. Crops can also be contaminated by the soil condition in which the plants are grown. Many farmers water their crops by irrigation lakes or pond. This can put several other types of pesticides on the plants. The main problem is that everything has already been contaminated by the mistakes of yesterday. The problem will not get better unless we stop the use of pesticides. Here are some commodities and the percentages of pesticide residues found in each; 63% of strawberries, 55% of peaches, 53% of celery, and 52% of cherries (Mott & Snyder 21). So what can we do as consumers? We must demand food without pesticide residue. As the consumer we also need to wash all produce. Another way to guarantee that there will be no pesticides on the food you eat is to grow your own fruits and vegetables

So what happens when you eat these pesticides? Some pesticides are harmless but so many more are deadly. There are nine types of pesticides that have been identified by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to cause cancer. These nine are; captan, chlorothalonil, permethrin, acephate, DDT, parathion, dienldrin, methomyl, and folpet. Three of these have been banned from major uses yet they are still commonly found in humans. Cancer is the big problem when it comes to unsafe pesticides, but they still have a greater affect on humans and wildlife. Pesticides also cause mutations in newborns. They take at least one generation to form (Regerstein 254). These can be passed from generation to generation by breast milk and semen. It is now proven that pesticides can make men and women sterile. With all the problems that pesticides have brought on our generation, it should make us wonder what will develop in the ones to come. Pesticides have a greater affect on animals. In animals pesticides commonly break down the their nervous system. When pesticides are found in the sources of food and water, animals of a smaller size tend to die instantly.

Now that you have a greater knowledge of pesticides and the damages they cause, you may ask yourself, what are the alternatives? The alternatives to this major problem are very limited. There are two alternatives to the usage of pesticides. The first and most common is to use environmentally safe pesticides. These are pesticides that do not harm the environment in any way. Natural pesticides are another way. These are pesticides made organically, such as pepper spray. There are more alternatives that are being studied everyday. One new process is shock treatments. Dr. Eric Davies chairman of the botany department at N.C. State University is heading the study. Dr. Davies has found a way to shock the plants. This triggers a gene to produce natural chemicals that help the plant fight off predatory insects(Tiker 1B). Although far off from being a cure, his studies may lead to potential alternatives.

In conclusion I’m going to end by saying that pesticides have a major effect on the world we live in. Everyday some part of the environment is destroyed due to the use of pesdicides. Every time we bite into an apple we’re taking a chance with our safety. To think that the animals are paying the price of our mistakes. It is in my mind that we owe it to them and ourselves to stop the use of pesticides.

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