

APPENDIX 2

Extracts taken from a few of the emails/letters that I have been receiving to highlight the comments that are being made by others who also have the direct experience of this situation:-

- **George**

I am so pleased that you are taking up the issue of crop spraying and at the same time, so sorry that you have had to. For some time I have been concerned about this issue. I live in a small village and we have 6 cases of ME and several times people have remarked at the very high number of cancer, leukaemia and other illnesses. My daughter was one of the ME sufferers and chose to end her life on her 27th birthday in 2001.

We moved here in 1980, living adjacent to a field. We had not been here long before my daughter was caught in the spray of an aircraft spraying the crops. I believe that this practice has now been banned. But we have still had to put up with the spray drifting onto our garden.

I believe much of the problem of these illnesses has been caused by organophosphates. Farmers dipping their sheep became ill with an ME like illness. Tents used in the Gulf War in early 90s were sprayed with organophosphates. They were sold after the war. I later read that many of the people who bought the tents became ill also.

I feel that the government will do their best to totally ignore this issue if they can. To admit to it would involve them having to pay out fantastic compensation.

- **Dear Georgina,**

I read your piece with fascination and would like to express my admiration for what you are doing, you are very courageous.

I moved with my husband and young child to a village just south of Lincolnshire is another heavily industrialised agricultural county.

3 years on...one neighbour has died of a cancer, the next door neighbour is dying of leukemia, the neighbour next to him has had leukemia (all 3 in their 50's), 2 women (in 30's) in the village have had breast cancer, a mother at my child's school has lupus, there are plenty of miscarriages, I myself have had one (but am late 30's) and my 6 year old suffers from headaches. There is also what the doctor calls a "virus" going round with symptoms of joint pain, itchy rash, flu symptoms. I also hear stories of dogs going blind etc.

- **George,**

I would say that where we live, has more than it's fair share of health problems, ranging from premature deaths from heart attacks and strokes, high numbers of people with epilepsy and various cancers, and yes, even the dogs seem to die young. One lady stopped walking her dog in the orchards because it lost the hair from it's belly. The hair grew back but the dog still died young from cancer, as did our neighbour's. There are also vast numbers of children with asthma and eczema and the local primary school is sometimes down on pupils by as many as a third. We moved here from central London, expecting to be able to offer our children a better quality of life. Bad move I think!

What I really need to know is how we can find out what is being sprayed locally

- **Dear Georgina,**

I have seen the article in today's Observer.

In 1987 we moved to a house which faces a very large field which is used to cultivate potatoes, spring onions, wheat and sometimes lettuce. The crops are sprayed regularly.

In 1998 our son was diagnosed with leukaemia and he died in March 2000 at the age of 21. His bedroom faced the field (in an easterly direction from which the wind blows regularly in this part) and was only about 20 metres from the edge of the field. He often complained of a metallic taste in his mouth when the field had been sprayed.

A neighbour's dog, which was regularly exercised around the field died of leukaemia a year before my son's illness was diagnosed.

We will probably never know the cause of his illness. However, the doctors who treated him showed no interest in collecting environmental data. It is only by the careful collection of data that the risks can be identified and quantified and action taken.

I wish to encourage you in your efforts to establish the link between pesticide spraying and ill-health and would like to help you in anyway possible.

- **Email:**

We bought a farmhouse in Yorkshire when my son was six years old.

During the long summer holiday of 1986 our son was taken ill and given six weeks to live as he had a tumour in his oesophagus followed by Bell's Palsy and diagnosed in ten days with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. He died nine months later at the age of 16. We think that the relentless spraying and use of chemical fertilisers causes the body to be constantly "on the defensive" and eventually overloaded. Our son was a beautiful healthy child and yet this awful thing happened to him.....

The farmers are not immune from attack by their own chemicals as they well know. Some families suffering Lymphomas, Leukaemia and cases of cerebral palsy.

We were discouraged from making further investigations at the time and told nothing could be done because there was no cluster of cases.

- **Dear Georgina,**

I listened this morning to your programme, which recalled memories.

I live in a small village with 363 residents. We are surrounded by arable farmland.

In late spring of 1996 I had just returned from walking my dogs and decided to enjoy that Sunday afternoon sitting in my garden, which is surrounded on three sides by fields.

The distance from my garden chair to the field was about 25 ft. A chain link fence separates the two with a few low growing plants on my side. The sun was warm but it was windy (later confirmed by RAF Wattisham when I telephoned them with my post code, to be 19 mph gusting up to 28). The wind was blowing directly towards my house and garden from the fields.

One dog was lying beside my lawn chair when a tractor with a sprayer attached drew up on the other side of the fence right opposite me. Looking up I could see right into his cab so he could

certainly see me from his higher vantage point. The sprayer arms unfolded and the next minute both dog and I were covered in a mist of chemicals.

My face, bare arms and legs immediately started burning and itching, as did my eyes. I rushed indoors and attempted to clean my dog who stank like I did. I then had a shower and dumped all my clothes into the washing machine along with the dog towels. For the next 24 hours I was nauseous had a bad headache and itched.

On Monday I called the Environmental Health Office who sent a representative to see me on the Tuesday. After talking to the farmer in question and examining his spray records he returned to me and said there was nothing dangerous in the chemicals being used.

In 1997 the dog who was sprayed while with me died of cancer. Two months after his death, in August 1997, I was diagnosed with breast cancer which resulted in a mastectomy with 23 lymph nodes being removed 11 of which were malignant.

There is no history of breast cancer on my side of the family. Although not a vegetarian I rarely eat red meat. My diet consists of many vegetables and fruits many of which are organic. I try and garden organically in that I myself use no chemicals in the garden at all. However, spray drift from the other side of my fence obviously contaminates my food crops.

In September of 1997 I joined WEN (Womens Environmental Network) who were then just completing a two year UK wide survey of breast cancer. I completed a questionnaire for them and also told them of a number of friends in neighbouring villages (also surrounded by arable land) who had breast cancer.

It was interesting to note that when the WEN survey was finally completed it indicated some of the worst hot spot areas were located in East Anglia.

My local farmer now has to fax me when he intends spraying, however, that is all he does....then he sprays regardless of wind speed or direction. About 3 years ago I received a fax stating "spraying at noon". It was an extremely windy day and when I telephoned RAF Wattisham they confirmed wind speeds of 25 mph gusting up to 41 mph and these were sweeping across the field directly at my house.

I faxed the farmer back and asked if he could possibly delay spraying until Monday as that was forecasted to be calm. He ignored my request and sprayed at noon. All our windows were covered in a light sticky film of something smelling chemical. Fortunately I had closed them.

Each time the farmer sprays.....I have to keep my dogs in the house and deny them the use of the garden for at least a week as I am now terrified of the consequences. Frankly, I'm not too keen on gardening myself after the sprayer has been around.....

- **Hi Georgina**

I live on the Isle of Wight in a rural area and am surrounded on all four sides by crop sprayed fields. I had breast cancer in 1998, my next door neighbour & a lady just down the road contracted the disease in 1999 and there are two other ladies a little further away who have also had breast cancer.

My daughter, who is now 26 has polycystic ovaries. She was born here and lived in the house until she was 18. When she was a baby I would put her in the pram in the garden. In those days the spraying was carried out by air and the planes would come across with no warning, so by the time I was able to bring her in she had already been sprayed!

I am convinced all these cases have something to do with the pesticides and would be only too pleased to join your campaign.

I was very impressed with your programme on the television and do admire what you are doing.

- **Dear Miss Downs,**

I was greatly interested to read the *Observer's* recent article about the damage to your family's health as a result of crop spraying, and your ongoing fight with the government to expose the health risks.

I am 16, and live in a small village, a strong farming area. For nearly five years now I have suffered from bowel problems and two years ago I was diagnosed as having Ulcerative Colitis (similar to Crohn's disease), the cause being "unknown".

I live with my family next to a field, separated from us by only a metre-wide strip of hedge and grass. This is one of the most intensely crop-farmed areas of Scotland, and over the years our field has been sown with various grains, potato, rape and other brassica. Needless to say, the field is subject to heavy spraying.

When we suggested to our doctors the possibility of my disease being caused by the chemicals on the fields they disregarded the idea, as they could find no evidence for it in my bloodstream.

However, I and my family remain unconvinced. There are several cases of bowel disease in our small village, as well as other illnesses, and it is has not been uncommon in the past for animals to give to birth to deformed litters in the summer, after heavy crop spraying. A friend also lost an entire aviary after his neighbouring field was sprayed.

It is also surely not just a coincidence that (as my specialist doctor informs me) this area has an unusually high rate of bowel disease – especially amongst youngsters – and we are also the most intensely farmed area in the whole of Scotland.

- **Hi,**

I read with great interest the article in the *Observer* of 13 April 2003. My 15 year old sister has suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome for the past seven years, she is home schooled and now suffers from multiple food and chemical sensitivities. It has been heart breaking to see my bright happy sister disintegrate into someone who at times can barely sit up. My mother has also suffered from CFS for the same number of years. Recently my youngest sister started to suffer from frequent bouts of eye infections and respiratory infections, she also suffers from unexplained stomach problems, the same problems that have plagued me from an early age.

Our house overlooks an intensively managed farm, the two are separated by a road but my sisters' main bouts of illness are associated with the times of crop spraying throughout the year. There are frequent incidents of cancers and leukaemia in our area and believe that there will be a direct link between the two.

I am extremely glad that someone has the courage to take on the government over this matter. It has worried many for some time.

- **Dear Ms Downs,**

I read the article about crop spraying in *The Observer* this Sunday, and would like to contact you regarding the death of my son, aged 13, from a brain tumour in November 2002. Previous to his death, he was a healthy child rarely staying away from school for health reasons. He did, however, have a mysterious skin problem on his hands which the doctors were unable to explain, though I think they did say it might have been related to exposure to an unidentified substance. We live in a village and our garden overlooks a field which used to have cows on it the summer.

Before they were put out, it was sprayed with pesticide though I cannot remember how frequently it was done or what pesticide was used. There is no history of brain tumours in my husband's family or my own. In addition, my other son, aged 11, was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome - again, no such problem has existed in either of our families.

I should very much like to offer you any help I can in your campaign to protect members of the public against the effects of crop spraying.

- **Hi,**

I was not sure who to contact with this information, but after watching a shocking programme on the BBC, about a families struggle in living on the edge of a field which is sprayed with pesticides, I felt I wanted to tell someone of our frighteningly similar story, if only to help strengthen the case for better laws to protect us.

I live in a village, a farming village and I have lived here all my life, I have actually lived on the edge of the same field in different houses, once for about 5 years when I was young (4 – 9 YEARS) and recently with my own family for 6 years. When I was young my friends and I permanently spent time in the corn field building dens just after the crop sprayer has been over. My health has not been good for a few years now, but tests have revealed nothing when I have repeatedly been back to the doctors with extreme tiredness and lethargy, muscle weakness, sore throats one after the other, tight chestedness, short of breath and most recently I have developed SVT whilst living at this house. What really made my mind up to contact you is that it was not only me that had serious ill health since living at this address, but my husband suffered severe tiredness, my daughter headaches and my youngest has Asthma. Also one neighbour developed a serious thyroid problem and another neighbour developed cancer and has since died at the age of 41. My direct neighbour suffered extreme tiredness too. All this in a small close with nine houses.

- **Dear Georgina,**

Congratulations for doing all you have re pesticide spraying.

Responsibility, ethics and accountability are words many people & Governments using pesticides don't have.

Residents in West Auckland have been fighting pesticide being sprayed on their community for the last 16 months, every 2 - 3 weeks. Needless to say there are many sick people.

- **Letter:-**

I watched your programme "The Food Police" on 26th March with great interest.

From 1971 – 1993 I was the vicar of Fletching, a rural Sussex parish and my family and I were delighted to be among the farming community and all the animals. However, we did not bargain for what happened re: crop-spraying, usually by vehicle with wide "wing sprayers" and occasionally by aeroplane. Our house there adjoined the fields.

About 15 years ago I was in the garden under the car and my wife called to me to get indoors quickly. As I scrambled out the sprayer passed where I was and I got caught in a cloud of spray and felt it burn as some went down my throat. I telephoned the local health centre and followed their advice to find out the contents of the spray mixture then telephone Guy's hospital poison/burns unit. They had no known antidote and told me to "wait and see." Over the months I suffered voice loss – an occasional (and regular) burning sensation in my chest – and gradually became unable to complete a church service without great strain and difficulty. I had speech therapy but things worsened and I retired in 1993, eight years early.

Speech therapy followed – to no avail and having lost the names of the spray contents in our retirement move, called at the farm to ask for them again. There was no knowledge of what the answer was and “not a chance” (because of no records!) of finding out for me. I had explained that I was going to see a specialist in London (via St. Luke’s hospital for the clergy) and wanted the information to be helpful.

That visit led to diagnosis of collapsed vocal chords and two unsuccessful operations to rectify the situation – followed by yet again more speech therapy. This coming Tuesday, 1st April I see the specialist in London again because my left ear has been affected over the years and conversation is extremely difficult with – at times – voice complete loss.

As well as all the physical and other effect I also lost 8/37 of my pension, was put on invalidity benefit instead of receiving the ordinary state pension, lost over a stone in weight (now restored) and was advised by the NHS doctor (people on invalidity benefit have to be “approved” for it) to have a complete health overhaul because I apparently looked such a mess.

I did think that crop-spraying machines had to maintain a certain distance away from dwellings but the one we suffered could not have been nearer the fence had it tried.

I wonder also what happens if infants are put in the garden in a pram.

Overall it is extremely tiring and demoralising having to repeat myself time and time again in conversation and it would probably be simpler to have a sign saying “mute” round my neck and leave it at that!

- **Hello,**

Firstly I'd like to say that I'm sorry you are inflicted with the spraying of crops near you, but that I am pleased to hear that some one is standing up to both the sprayers and also the government. I have been fighting a losing battle with the farmer that frequently sprays her crops and my land with pesticide sprays and pellets.

I have awoken on a number of times with a sore throat and almost numb feeling in my mouth only to find they are spraying 2 m away from my open window. If they are "safe" why should they affect me in this way??

I have made numerous requests to be contacted especially since my 8 week old boy has had 2 episodes of breathing difficulties and spent time in the intensive care unit as a result of this.

Yet still I've swept hundreds of fertilizer pellets from my front door and covered by the dust when attempting to leave the house. I now don't open the windows during the night for fear of their "sneakie" nocturnal habits which with a young baby and toddler I am usually awake to witness.

I have contacted the psd who are helpful but very obviously not looking after my interests. Good luck with the campaign, I'd be interested to know any developments....

- **hi**

i have just read your article with great interest. I have a 20 month old baby who keeps becoming ill. seems to be every time the farmer sprays something. His rape seed is literally two feet from my fence. interestingly I keep getting tired and feel all achy perhaps that is what is wrong with me. thank you for publishing your story and shedding so light on my problems

- **Dear Miss Downs,**

Earlier this year, I was taking my two year old daughter for a walk near Chichester when we were suddenly enveloped in a fine greenish foul smelling mist coming from a crop spraying machine operating in a field on the other side of the road. Because of the variable wind and movement of the machine, we were unable to escape into fresh air until I had walked half a mile further down the road carrying the baby.

I was very concerned about what the chemicals were that my daughter had had to breathe and contacted the Chichester Local Council in order to find out. I visited the council in person and related the incident to the duty environmental receptionist who, because of the matter of the child, appeared to take the issue seriously even though I was unable to say how often this spraying was taking place. I was told that they would contact environmental health officers and make an investigation. I left my name and address, identified the field in question on their map and agreed that the farmer in question was probably a However, I have never received any information or even an acknowledgement of my report and to this day I am none the wiser as to what the chemicals were.

No doubt you have encountered much greater obstacles than me and you are undoubtedly more persistent! However, I thought it might be of interest to learn how an ordinary member of the public can be 'ditched' by the local council, albeit on a matter of child safety. Perhaps you have better contacts there? Also, if you can guide me to information about what sort of chemicals are being used and what the health consequences might be when inhaled by infants I would be most grateful.

- **Dear Georgina,**

We have only lived in our house for two years and have a small meadow at the bottom of the garden this was sprayed once last April or May and following that I had eye trouble, each eye alternately flaring up with two or three styes. These went on for a few weeks and needed eye cream from the GP in May 2002. Also at the same time my husband found a poor blinded rabbit which had wandered out of the meadow and was in the road. I have not yet seen the family who own the field to ask what was used but it was a weedkiller of some kind.

Your first e mail and its attachment made sorrowful reading and I know this is just a small example from the letters you have received. This problem with the farm sprays is such an enormous one and has gone on for so many years now (I would say almost 50 years) that it is hard to comprehend the unnecessary suffering and loss of life to the people (and even animals) of these islands.

Thank you again for all your efforts, we will be praying for your work and that you and your family may keep well.

- **Dear georgina**

I moved to suffolk five years ago and bought a lovely little cottage surrounded by farm land. One of the fields is 5 feet from my properties boundary. When we purchased the cottage the field was not used by the farmer. Unfortunately last year he started renting it to a local farmer and i am very worried. The farmer sprays his chemicals on the field, as it is so close to our home (5 feet) we have to shut all doors and windows and barricade ourselves indoors. Recently I was very ill and had breathing problems. Apparently now I suffer from asthma. I share your concerns whole heartedly and applaud your actions.

We moved to the country for fresher air and peace and quiet. Some joke eh!

- **Dear Georgina**

We have been in contact with the land-owner and with the farmer himself, explaining about my husband's weakened lungs, as the farmer does spray right up to the boundary of the field, which is only 3m away from our kitchen window. Two years ago, whatever it was he was using killed a great many bushes in the hedge, and badly affected shrubs in the garden causing the previous owners to speak to both him and the local NFU liaison officer about it. Despite this, 2 weeks ago we observed him spraying the oil-seed rape and we were obliged to retreat indoors and close all the windows because of the chemical fumes.

- **Hi Georgina,**

We thank you for all the effort you and your family have put in over the years, and we are pleased that the Government is now taking note of the problem.

However, as we intend to stay here long term, we are concerned about long term effects as well as short term. It would be useful if there was a list of toxicity of the various pesticides used on different crops.

- **Dear Ms Downs**

I am the country walks correspondent of for the last seven years, 340 walks. Come the summer spraying is sometimes on my mind and I have received a little correspondence from my readers on this. I would like public rights of way and open access areas protected from dangerous spraying.

In the context of an enlarging eco-agriculture there should be room for plenty of land designated as we should wish.

- **Dear Georgina**

Thanks for the email. Certainly dated information re spraying on public rights of way would do us walkers nicely. Consequently walkers, children, dogs even, have to brush their way through the crop, picking up a good coating

- **Dear Georgina,**

I am mailing you reference your problem and the similar one that I too have here. I live out in the country with my wife and three small children, my back garden backs onto fields that are regularly sprayed with something that seems to make me wake up the following morning with a severe headache. Is there any responsibility issues at all relating to farmers disclosing the information about the chemicals they are putting into the atmosphere or are they really a law to themselves.

I can't believe that there is no way or law that must state that the general public must be made aware of the risks of spraying.

- **Dear Georgina**

Thanks so much for your email and it was good to hear about your continued efforts to change the law in this area.

To be honest after I watched The Food Police I decided not to proceed with buying the house in Climping. I was so upset to see what had happened to you and your family and decided there was absolutely no point in taking a risk. Your plight at least pre-warned me of the possible dangers but sadly you of course had none!

- **Dear Georgina**

I was woken this morning by the sound of a tractor and my heart sunk as once again I watched it going up and down the fields which surround my house spraying the wheat.

I am aware that you are promoting the campaign against crop spraying near houses, schools etc. and was wondering what progress you are making and how people can get involved to help you.

Like you, I always make sure the windows are firmly shut and my son is confined to the house while the spraying takes place, but it is unbelievable that the farmer doesn't have to at least give notice before the spraying takes place and to inform the local population which chemicals or fertilizers are being used.

- **Dear Georgina**

We lived in a Lincolnshire village in the 1980's and witnessed crop spraying from aircraft. A workmate who is no longer with us was a keen gardener lost plants owing to spraying, he passed away at the age of 56, he did suffer breathing difficulties.

We moved to a national parks area in 1986, where we lived for 14 years, we never witnessed any spraying only a little liming as we now live we are back in an agricultural area where crop spraying does take place and as my wife suffers from asthma I am concerned, we walk our dog across paths that bisect growing crops so it is impossible to avoid spraying across the footpath and one never knows without observing when these operations have taken place an obvious danger to us and the dog also.

The school is in very close proximity to where crop spraying takes place.

- **Dear Georgina,**

Like you and your family, my husband and I live surrounded by arable fields that are sprayed with dangerous chemicals. Like you, I have been made very ill by them, and like you, we have to shut ourselves up indoors when spraying is taking place. Luckily, I am on very good terms with all the farmers responsible for the spraying, and they always let me know when they are about to start work.

My situation is made more complicated by the fact that I suffer from acute multiple chemical sensitivity, which began with exposure to wood treatment. My condition means that our lives are restricted. We can only take holidays in Europe and North America, because flying further afield means that one is sprayed with insecticide in the aeroplane cabin on the way home.

I am sure that more needs to be done to bring the scandal of chemical poisoning to public and ministerial notice, and I admire you very much for what you are doing.

- **George**

I did not see all of the issues covered by the programme but my daughter did, and she informs me that it was like seeing and hearing her own father. Over the last two years my voice has deteriorated to a point where only a few people can understand me and I have had to give up my job as I could not communicate effectively. My GP has referred me to a Neurologist and he is waiting to see if it affects any other muscle groups before giving me a diagnosis. I live in a rural area and may have been exposed to herbicides and pesticides, in actual fact I sprayed our two acre paddock with a cocktail recommended by a local contractor to get rid of perennial weeds. I did this without a face mask of any kind after being assured it would not affect me, I now wonder.

- **Dear Georgina,**

We watched with great interest, sympathy and concern the piece on the Food Police programme about your battle against your neighbouring farmer's agricultural spraying, not to mention admiration for your fighting spirit.

We were particularly interested because while living in New Zealand some 30 years ago we had a not dissimilar experience. We had bought a house in an area where chinese gooseberries (nowadays marketed as kiwi fruit) were grown. What we did not know was that these were heavily sprayed with organophosphates because if any of the fruit arrived in the USA with any sign of insect infestation the consignment would be destroyed. Mind you, chinese gooseberries grow perfectly well without being sprayed.

My wife was out walking along the road one day when she saw a man in what looked like a chemical warfare suit driving a tractor spraying the plants. The spray drifted over her. The effects on her health were appalling. We had to sell up quickly and move away - we were fortunate that we could sell. There was one doctor in NZ at that time who was aware of the dangers of spraying and he monitored her cholinesterase levels, which dropped dangerously low. The official explanation of that was that the laboratory had made a mistake.

- **Dear Georgina**

I live approximately one kilometre from the neighbours, but unfortunately only some fifty metres from the lands farmed by two consortiums and treated every twenty one days with products I can only guess at when crops planted there can be husbanded this way.(i.e. with the lowest labour intensity) Attempts to get them to notify me as to when and with what they will be spraying have so far failed and the local HSE say there is nothing that can be done as long as they follow the guide lines! This of course is no help to me and I become a prisoner at home when these products are being used. With many health authorities still being like mine, refusing conclusive testing, the problem is catastrophic for sufferers. In my case I was fortunate to have a supportive GP and was lucky to take part in the SCOPE survey and therefore obtain the evidence to pursue my treatment.

- **Email:-**

I last night watched a documentary about this issue. I was astonished that spraying known hazardous chemicals can take place so close to the edge of farmland. It is unacceptable that anyone should legally be able to spread known toxins of any type so that they may be transported off the owners land and onto/into people who give no permission to be poisoned. If anyone let poisons into the water supply there would be an outcry. Remember Camelford? So how can it be OK to poison the air? Passive smoking is being dealt with, how about passive organophosphate inhaling? Many people may be affected by this and have no way of knowing. It appears the Government have no idea how much people are affected by it. Is there a link with asthma?

I wonder if legally this would not be considered a nuisance and could be stopped on that basis, but I would like to see more specific law against such poisons floating around, or even being washed around. What happens if it rains after spraying and another property is down-stream?

- **Dear Georgina,**

I watched with great interest on Food Police tonight, about your family and the problems you are having with pesticides. I was appalled at what you all have been through and how selfish the Farmer is by not divulging information about his pesticides. It seems unbelievable in this day and age that there is no regulation or law to cover this problem and I fully back your approach to the Government to ask for their support in changing the laws.

Please feel free to show this letter of support to the Minister when you next have a meeting.

- **Dear Ms Georgina Downs**

I read with interest and empathy your paper entitled "Can we have a breath of fresh air?" which appeared in Observer Sunday April 13, 2003. I know and assist peoples who are suffering from ills caused by exposure of environmental chemicals, including agricultural and horticultural chemicals. I want to inform your article and campaign to them, through their internet home page. I should appreciate it if you could a permission of translation into Japanese and posting on their home page your article. Prof.....Dr. Department of 1st Anatomy Hamamatsu University School of Medicine Handa-yama 1-20-1 Hamamatsu 431-3125 Japan

- **Dear Downs:**

Thank you for your pemission.

I think you cannot read this japanese version of your article directly, because which contains specific Japanese font.

It is posted on following URL:

<http://www.geocities.co.jp/NatureLand-Sky/5613/georgina0304.htm>

Today (23 April), they will make a petition to Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, in order to limit pesticide application in residential areas.

- **Georgina,**

I read about your campaign in The Observer this last week. As a "semi-professional" in the health & safety field I was intrigued by the apparent disparity between what is required of (manufacturing) industry and what appears to be OK for Farming.

There are very clear rules in the COSHH Regulations for example which make it a duty on employers to accurately assess the exposure to substances and to ensure that they fall within prescribed figures. In the case of substances which have the most serious health effects there is a maximum exposure level set and published and a company has to be able to demonstrate that it does not exceed that level and that it has made efforts to reduce the level to that as low as is reasonably practicable. In these cases the HSE usually has a lot to say for itself.

Normally what happens within a factory does not affect members of the public but in farming the potential is obviously much greater. I wonder what the crop-spraying employee wears during his activity and why the public are not entitled to a proper risk assessment? Clearly there is something strange here.

- **Email:-**

I am surprised by the attitude of the HSE inspectors which contradicts my experience.

Earlier this year I went on a "voluntary" half day course on farm safety organised by the HSE. This involved 20 minutes talks and demonstrations on a variety of farm hazards given by experienced farmers and HSE Inspectors.

One lecture on handling chemicals and mixing them for use in sprayers demonstrated how much could

splash on to you during the process. They went to quite some trouble to explain which sort of protective clothing to use and of what standard, apparently most industrial rubber gloves only act as an impermeable barrier for 2 to 6 minutes. It was surprising what a high quality of equipment they recommend in terms of gloves, overalls and face mask.

This obviously contradicts the HSE's attitude to the effects of the same chemicals on someone stood in their own garden in a T-shirt and shorts while the neighbouring field is sprayed, which may happen several times a month. Obviously there is a difference in concentration levels between mixing the concentrate and the final sprayed liquid but there is an enormous difference between wearing protective clothing and bare skin.

I have just received DEFRA's leaflet on "Keeping Pesticides out of Water" which has the following quotes:-

"In just one second two nozzles can deliver enough pesticide to contaminate the water in a 3 kilometre length of a good size brook"

"Half a litre of mixed concentrate could contaminate 60,000 cubic metres of water to the EC limit - equivalent to the contents of a reservoir for a large town"

If it does that to drinking water I suppose you shouldn't breath in the area of spray droplets !

- **Dear Georgina**

I have just read the article in the Telegraph about the stand you are taking on pesticide spraying.

I think you will find that this is just the tip of the iceberg! I live next door to a field which luckily is usually set-aside, but I am still affected by the herbicide that is sprayed a couple of times a year on the field and have to keep the doors and windows closed for several days after spraying, although this is a product they say is "completely harmless."

I became very ill after being sprayed by pesticides on long-haul flights 8 times in 3 weeks.

I would therefore like to encourage you in the worthwhile work you are doing and wish you every success in getting acknowledgement that health is affected, that these substances are dangerous and that members of the public should have legal protection.

- **Dear Georgina**

I read the article in The Independent on Sunday with great interest having recently moved to a barn conversion. We noticed a very strong unpleasant smell on two occasions when the field behind us was sprayed and wondered what we were being exposed to. The field is sown with wheat but there also oats and barley fields adjacent.

Is there any way we can find out what it is that is being used and the potential consequences??

Any advice would be much appreciated.

We applaud your crusade.

- **Email:-**

Saw article in Sunday Telegraph 31/8. I have lived next to agricultural land for the last 6 years. It seems more than just a coincidence that I

have been experiencing more frequent headaches, poorer memory and utter tiredness each March/April following crop spraying, mostly of wheat. I hope this is of help.

- **Dear Ms Downs,**

Until recently I lived in a house in Yorks; the house had a large triangular garden, which we had always avoided treating with chemicals, and we harvested many kinds of fruit, which we considered to be unofficially organic. The garden was bordered to the South by a main road and on the North by a field leased to a tenant, who farmed the field by "remote control", i.e. contractors.

One day several of us were in the garden; the wind was blowing briskly from the North. A tractor started spraying the field with a product which smelled strongly of kerosene; the mist swept rapidly through the garden, coating us (including a young child); we could feel the effect in our throats.

I ran across the field to remonstrate with the driver. As I did so, I could see the mist sweeping across the road and its travellers; little of it was reaching the crop. I suffered a sore throat; we did not harvest any fruit that year.

The driver advised me that the product was harmless (*but declined to splash his face*), and that the wind was a slight breeze, which could not carry spray outside the field.

I am a registered Offshore Installation Manager and Helicopter Landing Officer; I am accustomed to recording operational and meteorological data on a daily basis. My certified anemometer showed that the wind speed was averaging 12m/s (about 25 mph), with frequent stronger gusts.

The tenant said he was not involved. The contractor told me that I was being a nuisance, and said he would take action for nuisance if I continued my complaint!

The manufacturer said the product was not dangerous if applied in accordance with instructions (only to be used on calm days!)

The authorities (HSE, etc.) said there was little they could do; they telephoned the contractor, who said there was no wind, but declined to take up my suggestion that they contact Leeming Airfield nearby for wind speed data.

In effect, if the contractor says everything is OK, that's it! (*Perhaps I could tell the Police I WASN'T speeding!*)

This was and is outrageous. The public seems to have no remedy for the nuisance, harm, crop damage, etc.

More strength to your elbow! The authorities must act! (But the government doesn't really give a damn about ordinary people ...)

- **Hi Georgina,**

I was very pleased to see the article in the Sunday Telegraph as I have suffered similar symptoms over the last ten years and attributed them to crop spraying. I was in the Royal Marines at the time and extremely fit being a keen sportsman and a competitive runner, I had never previously had any allergies or breathing related ailments. I was cycling to work through country lanes one day, I couldn't see any farm vehicles nearby but felt what was like a handful of grit being thrown

into my eyes. I later developed breathing difficulties and had to give up running for an extended period, I had to give my cat away as I became allergic to pet hair, house dust mite and a range of other allergens. Doctors were mostly unhelpful but I have ended up with asthma inhalers (which even now I have to use if I go running in other than the mildest weather), steroid sprays/injections and anti-histamine tablets.

Unfortunately I wasn't sure initially what the cause was and it is only with hindsight that I can track it back to this one incident and as a result have not followed up with local farmers or the government. I realise this is purely anecdotal but hope it helps to support a circumstantial case.

- **Georgina**

I live in Oxfordshire and I have suffered blackouts and nausea when the crops have been sprayed. It happened a couple of times this summer when I went for my usual jog down the lane in the village and I had no idea why I blacked out and felt dizzy till I heard at a parish council meeting that the crops had just been sprayed. I was unable to find out what chemical spray had been subjected to.

I think it's disgusting that farmers are allowed to use toxic chemicals and an abuse of human rights that we don't even have the right to know what we've been poisoned with.

Furthermore, I pay a lot of money to buy organic food to avoid being subjected to these kinds of chemicals - not really worth bothering is it, if the stuff's in the air we breathe anyway?

- **Hi Georgina,**

There was an article in yesterday's Sunday Telegraph saying that you were collecting evidence re the above.

Whilst this is purely assumption, I thought I'd tell you about my cat. You may have heard similiar stories and want to add this to your files.

He went missing and was found 3 days later about half a mile from home and on the edge of farmland. I don't know what was grown or kept on that land as I haven't been there. He was very ill and the vet has concluded that he had been poisoned but is not sure by what means.

The cat could not breathe properly and was extremely floppy, he had lost the use of all 4 legs. (We thought at first he'd been hit by car, but xray showed he had no broken bones and no other signs of trauma.) When a tube was inserted to see if he had any blockages the vet said the cat's pharynx was red rare and congested with blood. The cat was given a laryngotomy and put on a drip. 3 days later he could breathe without the tube and began to recover the use of his legs. He is now home, eating well and permanently sleeping.

His mouth showed no evidence of him eating the poison, so it may be that he breathed it and perhaps on the farmland.

Please contact me if you need any further details.

- **Dear Miss Downs,**

I am an early-retired physics teacher and microwave engineer, who in my retirement have taken up nature conservation on a voluntary basis.

I have gradually taken on about 250 acres of woodland and restored downland and about 100 acres of these have since been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

We have seen spray floating over onto our SSSI land from an arable factory farm next door. This was presumably a fungicide or insecticide, both items we try to conserve on our land.

Irrespective of whether the chemicals involved are safe for human beings, I can see no reason that anyone should be allowed to contaminate the land or the person of other people during spraying.

Spraying should require a wide enough exclusion band at boundaries to avoid any possibility of significant contamination of neighbours.

I also feel no confidence in the Government or (Agro)Chemical Industry's testing of pesticides with reference to wildlife or human beings. Their history is a shameful one.

- **Dear Georgina Downs**

On 29th March last when I was walking on the Billy Trail (a family leisure trail on Hayling Island) a tractor was applying insecticide in adjacent fields and the spray got in my eyes. I have had GP visits and when I contacted Public Health a local H & S officer called and took a detailed statement.

My eyes are still affected and I have been on medication now for six months. I have had to wait for a consultant appointment at QA Hospital Cosham which has at last been scheduled in September. Any action you are taking will have my full support, let me know if I can do anything to add to your efforts.

- **Hiya Georgina**

I've just watched your article on BBC breakfast and I can't believe that the uncontrolled spraying of toxic chemicals is allowed to happen so near to habitation.

I'm sure the COSHH information sheet instructs the farmer to wear protective clothing whilst handling the chemicals and if he has to why is it then ok to spray them near unprotected people?

If you have (or know of) a website with an online petition then I will gladly add my name to the list.

Best wishes for your campaign.

- **Hello Georgia,**

I have M.E. and have had dogs with cancer. I have lived near sprayed fields for most of the time and the dogs have therefore also been near these sprays.

It should be compulsory by law for farmers using them to put up signs with date and name of spray and how long it remains active etc.

- **Email:-**

Having had crop spraying twice a week or so for the last couple of years right up to within a few feet of my property (field boundary at one place is only about 4 feet from one side of my bungalow) and again right up to another boundary wall - only about 20 feet from my kitchen... I am going to take the time to check out the websites, etc.. recommended by the email.

I have had a dog collapse twice after spraying - she has not done it since the spraying stopped and the field was reseeded to grass for grazing.

Her mother was recently euthanased with a horrendous tumour - surrounding her heart, going through one lung, through her diaphragm and meandering around her body cavity..... She was coming up to 12, but was otherwise in excellent order - moving soundly (full gallop still -as she was beautifully constructed - championship show winner, etc), with good coat and so on. Same applied to her mother, who went down with mammary tumours and then secondary kidney tumours.

- **Hi George,**

We have had two spraying sessions on the field behind my parents house this week alone – really! How many chemicals does it need to produce edible food these days, I am amazed!

Anyway, keep up the great work – you have my entire support – let me know if you need any help.

- **Hi Georgina,**

Certainly since we moved here the crops have been lettuce usually two crops per year and they have sprayed each time (each crop). We certainly haven't had any notification of when or what is being sprayed. This year it appears to be a cereal crop, which has also been sprayed at least twice. Both occasions were without notification, both on a lovely day with the breeze coming from the fields ie. spray too. I've had to go back in doors and shut windows.....

- **Georgina,**

Is it possible to raise awareness of the risks to urban dwellers from weed and pesticide spraying. All local government authorities spray their parks and open spaces as do other statutory bodies such as hospitals, and schools, social services, government ministries. Roads and pavements are also sprayed to get rid of weeds.

I live in a town, and recently my garden has been affected by spraying in the open space adjoining my garden. This is an old orchard owned by the Council as 'open space'. The perimeter and the old hedge are very heavily sprayed with, this year, a very aggressive unknown chemical. It has caused the plants on my side of the fence to discolour and fade away. I had an unexplained two day breathing problem about a week before the appearance of this blight. I cannot prove a connection.

I have complained to the local council because of the danger to small animal and birdlife in the hedge.

- **Email:**

The field next to my house used to be sprayed every year and my family all suffered illness, since the spraying stopped 3 years ago we've had none.

- **Dear Georgina,**

Having seen your TV documentary on spraying, I can tell you your fears are well founded. If you don't have mask and protective clothing, you are in danger of all kinds of ailments, I don't have enough paper to list them all, but would like to give you a little information which might help you. ***(retired farmer used sprays for 40 years and suffered both acute and chronic long-term health effects)***

- **Dear Georgina,**

I used to work in the commercial glasshouse industry and at a research institute. At both I used to have to spray pesticides and fungicides. I had to wear full protective clothing and breathing apparatus, but the main point is that no-one was allowed into the sprayed area for 1 day, fruit was not allowed to be eaten for up to 5-7 days the substance sprayed was so toxic. These are still used today. We were not allowed to spray anywhere where people were working which would apply to the garden etc. of the house and family shown. Being aware of the poisons used from working at the research establishment, in no way is any pesticide safe for anyone to breathe in the drifting spray.

In a further email he wrote:-

The government are withdrawing ALL chemical sprays etc in the private sector, re Gardeners , because it is dangerous. Whereas you are told that the farmer's sprays are safe.....

When I was spraying commercial crops or even a 6x6 greenhouse with some test plants for an experiment No one was allowed near me.....and on edible crops most chemicals had a quarantine period here no-one was allowed near the crop. Notices had to be displayed naming the hazard. note Hazard.

I feel that the Government is doing its best to hide all the evidence etc with Crop sprays.....They have no knowledge as to long term effects as many chemicals have not been around long enough to check the outcome.

The Farmer spraying near you would have read the instructions on the chemical spray containers. On those would be a warning saying what to do if you came in contact with the chemical, usually doctor/hospital with chemical name and then a de-tox of some kind. Also in the health & safety there would be instructions to keep animals/people away from the spray.....

• **Email:**

What the Government is saying is not true. I have been affected by pesticide poisoning. I used to spray it. Breast Cancer is 30 times higher in Lincolnshire than in any other Community.

• **Email:**

Your comments on Pesticides are important we should not believe what our government tells us. My final year project at University showed that the wholesale use of pesticides do impact our biology and I can prove this. They breakdown into molecular parts that has been shown to affect health.

This Government is damaging our health and not telling us about it.