

CANCER BLAMED ON AERIAL SPRAY

Anti-pesticide activist Day Owen believes the forestry herbicides that drifted onto his organic farm and onto his skin from a nearby helicopter spray in October 2007 may have given him skin cancer.

Owen, founder of the vocal anti-pesticide group the Pitchfork Rebellion, videotaped the 2007 helicopter spray and narrated the effects, including a feeling that his face was on fire and tasting the herbicide in his mouth. Owen reports that he developed a rash on parts of his body and that his forehead felt chemically burned. He says that's where a small growth developed and grew, and this August it turned black overnight.

The spray was a "cocktail of imazapyr, sulfometuron-methyl, and glyphosate, plus inert ingredients that they [Roseburg Forest Products] did not disclose due to 'trade secrets,'" Owen says.

Owen says he has had three surgeries to remove the basal cell carcinoma. He says, "Though it can't be proved, the circumstantial evidence leads me to believe it was the result of that exposure; the exact place that I

was chemically burned turned into a growth that then turned into cancer." He adds that he went to his doctor with his concerns about the growth on his forehead shortly after it first appeared.

'The exact place that I was chemically burned turned into a growth that then turned into cancer.'

- Day Owen, Pitchfork Rebellion

In addition to the aerial sprays, residents of Triangle Lake in Oregon's Coast Range have found evidence of pesticide exposures in their water and in their bodies. Owen and other Triangle Lake area dwellers participated in a January 2011 study by Dana Barr of Emory University that found 2,4-D and atrazine metabolites in the more than 40 people who participated.

A study of 1,341 licensed herbicide applicators in the Netherlands published in 2004 indicated that they were at an increased risk for skin cancer mortality, but "it is not clear if this excess of skin cancer should be attributed to herbicide exposure or to excess exposure to sunlight."

Several studies have shown that farmers exposed to pesticides are at a higher risk of cancer, including skin cancer. Owen says not enough research has been done on the link between various pesticides and skin cancer and he will be pressing for more research to be done.

Owen says he has no health insurance, and the three surgeries and lab work cost more than \$5,000. He is asking "people who have appreciated his eight years of unpaid volunteer work with the Pitchfork Rebellion" to help by making a donation toward the medical expenses. Pitchfork Rebellion has not accepted donations in the past, and Owen says if anything beyond the amount needed for the medical expenses comes in it will be donated to anti-pesticide groups. Checks can be made out to Day Owen and mailed to Pitchfork Rebellion, Box 160, Greenleaf, OR 97430.

— Camilla Mortensen

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