



*caring about you & your environment*

## **Report 01.833**

23 November 2001

File: Y/12/1/0

Report to Rural Services & Wairarapa Committee  
from Phillip Percy, Resource Advisor, Policy and Planning

### **Agrichemical Contractor Workshop**

#### **1. Purpose**

To inform the Committee about the outcomes of a workshop held for agrichemical contractors where the rules of the Regional Air Quality Management Plan were explained and discussed.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Regional Air Quality Management Plan became operative on 8 May 2000. The Plan includes two new rules relating to the application of agrichemicals. Rule 1 relates to the use of agrichemicals using land-based application methods, and Rule 2 relates to aerial application methods. Both rules provide for agrichemical use as a *permitted* activity provided it complies with the conditions listed in the rules.
- 2.2 Previously, there had been some correspondence to agrichemical contractors in the Wairarapa in the form of a letter and a double-sided brochure detailing the requirements of the rules. However it was considered that a workshop with contractors would provide an opportunity to explain the rules further and to receive some feedback on how the rules work in with the 'real world'.
- 2.3 A workshop was held at Swingers Café on 30 October, which was attended by approximately 30 agrichemical contractors who work in the Wairarapa. Presentations were made by:
  - Phillip Percy (Resource Advisor, Policy & Planning) – Explanation and interpretation of the rules.
  - Stephen Yeats (Senior Resource Advisor, Consents & Compliance) – Compliance with the rules and the Council's response to complaints.

- Eric Churton (New Zealand Horticulture Industry Training Organisation) – Recommendations on good practice and procedures.

### 3. Discussion

3.1 The following issues and suggestions were raised by the contractors:

- (i) The requirement in the rules to notify adjacent landowners and occupiers in certain situations is difficult to comply with. The rules place the onus on the contractor to undertake the notification, however the decision to spray is often only made the night or morning beforehand. Variable weather conditions also influence when spraying can take place. Therefore limited time is available to undertake notification. The suggested solution was to place the onus of notification on the landowner because they are more aware of the timing of the spraying and can contact neighbours more easily. This is the approach used by Horizons.mw.
- (ii) Notification of neighbours is generally not occurring. It is perceived as requiring unnecessary time in the office. There is also a belief that if people don't know that spraying is occurring, they aren't likely to be concerned about it. When notification does take place, it was felt that people become unnecessarily concerned.
- (iii) If notification is necessary, it would be easier to place a generic notice in the newspapers prior to the start of the spray season informing people that spraying of agrichemicals will take place in the Wairarapa during a specified period. If people are concerned, they can then contact the contractor.
- (iv) The requirement not to mix or dilute chemicals within 20 metres of a waterbody is impractical. Many chemical manufacturers recommend adding the chemical when the spray tank is half full to aid mixing. Most filling hoses are less than 20 metres long, so the mixing and filling has to take place close to the water source.
- (v) The current requirement to have a Growsafe Certificate or an Advanced Growsafe Certificate if spraying in public areas provides minimal assurance that good practice is being followed. These qualifications only teach theory and do not cover important practical skills such as spraying techniques and gear set-up, which can reduce adverse effects.
- (vi) A suggestion was made to exclude 'registered sprayers' from the rules because the problem area seems to be with 'non-professionals' using chemicals they are not familiar with and not using proper procedures.

3.2 Several observations were made by Regional Council staff at the meeting:

- (i) There appears to be significant reluctance to adhere to several of the permitted activity conditions, particularly those that require additional time 'in the office'.
- (ii) Most contractors appeared to appreciate that non-compliance with the rules could result in adverse publicity and penalties should action be taken against them. However they generally seemed prepared to take that risk.
- (iii) Generally, the contractors believe that their professionalism is sufficient to ensure adverse effects do not occur. They did, however, appreciate that the rules are partly designed to ensure that when something does go wrong, the Council is in a position to effectively do something about it - to catch the 'cowboys'.
- (iv) Only one of the contractors got involved at the time the Air Quality Management Plan was being formulated, both by making a submission and being an invited (and unpaid) member of a working group. He said he made a submission and went to the hearing but felt his concerns were brushed over and ignored. He didn't take the matter further because he believed he would continue to be ignored.

### 3.3 Changing the Rules

With significant dissatisfaction with the practicality and workability of the rules, there may be some justification for a review of the Plan. However, while a plan change may be a consideration, the concerns raised by the contractors should be balanced against the concerns of other members of the community before any changes are contemplated. During the plan formulation process, strong submissions were received from individuals and groups opposed to the use of agrichemicals, and many of the concerns they raised remain very valid.

## 4. **Communication**

- 4.1 As part of continuing this initiative, similar workshops and other methods will be used to inform and obtain feedback from other agrichemical users. Officers will be making a presentation at the local Fruitgrower's Association branch meeting in December, and will also become involved with viticulturists and pastoral farmers in 2002.
- 4.2 Double-sided brochures (Refer Attachments 1 and 2) outlining the rules have been distributed to local retailers that sell agrichemicals. Retail staff in all stores that were approached have agreed to distribute the brochures when they sell agrichemical products.

**5. Recommendation**

*That the report be received and the contents noted.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

Phillip Percy  
Resource Advisor, Policy & Planning

Steve Blakemore  
Manager, Planning & Resources