



**REMARKS**

**BY:**

**THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, SENIORS AND ENVIRONMENT**

**THE HON. JEANNE ATHERDEN JP, MP**

**ON**

**IMPORTATION OF WEED SPRAY “ROUND UP” TO BE SUSPENDED**

**11<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

Good afternoon and thank you all for coming.

The Ministry of Health, Seniors and Environment is committed to promoting safe practices as part of our stewardship of Bermuda’s delicate environment. Technical officers stay abreast of trends and scientific developments to ensure that our regulation of all aspects of how we influence the environment around us remains safe and in keeping with best practice.

Following a recent scientific study carried out by a leading cancer agency, the importation of weed spray “Roundup” has been suspended.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization (WHO), recently asked a group of experts from around the world to spend a year examining the data from peer-reviewed studies about Glyphosate, which is the active ingredient in *Roundup*.

As a result of this research, the (IARC) reported that it had assessed the cancer causing risk to humans of five pesticides including glyphosate.

According to the assessment, the herbicide glyphosate along with two other insecticides were classified as probably carcinogenic to humans. This description is used when there is limited evidence of cancer causing effect on humans and sufficient evidence of it in experimental animals. Limited evidence means that a positive association has been observed between exposure to the agent and cancer but that other explanations for the observations could not be ruled out. This category is also used when there is limited evidence of cancer causing in humans and strong data on how the agent causes cancer.

Currently, only two of the recently analyzed substances are permitted for importation and use in Bermuda. The remaining three that were reviewed as part of the research are already banned and their use is prohibited.

In light of the recent IARC study, Bermuda will take the following steps:

1. Effective immediately, all importers of glyphosate/*Roundup* will be notified that the approval for all glyphosate products has been suspended, pending the continuing assessment of the emerging research. Our hope is to complete the assessment within six months. However, orders placed for glyphosate will be honoured, with proof that the order had been placed prior to today, May 11th, 2015. Whilst the restrictions will take effect immediately; there will be a grace period of 14 days from today for **current importers** of *Roundup* during which they can make application at the Department of Environmental Protection to import small quantities of low concentrations of *Roundup*.
2. No further applications for the importation of glyphosate will be processed during this evaluation period.
3. I have asked the Department of Environmental Protection to convene a meeting with stakeholders including:
  - a. the industry (farmers, landscapers, golf-courses, merchants);
  - b. The Bermuda Health Department who are responsible for human health;
  - c. The Department of Environmental Protection's regulatory personnel;
  - d. The Department of Conservation Services;
  - e. The Department of Works and Engineering, who conduct roadside spraying, and
  - f. The Department of Parks

4. I have also asked the Toxicologist at the Health Department to collaborate with the Government Hydro-geologist and jointly conduct research to determine if any of the break-down products of glyphosate are present in the ground water and inshore waters. A report of findings will be prepared.
5. Once this important research and assessment is completed, the Government's final determination regarding *Roundup* (glyphosate) will be made clear for the public.

It is important to note that a similar assessment will be conducted for other pesticides of concern.

The Department of Works and Engineering can be contacted for the proper disposal of pesticides should any members of the public have a container of *Roundup* which they no longer wish to use.

For more information regarding alternative herbicides, the public can contact the Plant Protection Laboratory at the Department of Environmental Protection at 239-2321. They have a database that lists all of the pesticides imported into Bermuda, as well as where they can be purchased.

On a related front, I am also pleased to advise the public today that I have invited my Cabinet colleagues to support the long overdue development of regulations needed to properly regulate pesticides in Bermuda. The Pesticides Safety Act 2009 was passed by the Legislature but to date; the required Regulations have not been addressed. This important feature of safety and proper enforcement will be introduced to complete the work contemplated by the substantive Act.

I believe that the action we are taking today is prudent and in the best interests of a safe environment for Bermuda. Like any area of science, there are competing studies and a wealth of information on both sides of the argument. Having considered the clear and cogent advice of the Ministry's technical team, I am satisfied that this action is warranted and we are committed to conducting an open and thorough assessment.

Thank you.