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Date: Friday, October 21, 2011 10:17AM  
Subject: A petition for the banning of the herbicide Paraquat

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From:  
CHEUNG Ching Kan, Gisela (Ms)

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Attn:  
Panel for Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Dear Panel Members,

My beloved dog GoGo, passed away in the Wanchai Animal Clinic on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2011. She died of symptoms consistent with Paraquat poisoning. GoGo is not the first, during an approximate three week span in September 2011, at least 10 other dogs on Lamma Island were suspected to be killed by this deadly poison, likely by poison laced bait deliberately placed along paths. Some of the cases, including GoGo's, were already reported to the police.

Paraquat is a commonly used non-selective herbicide, however, it is highly toxic. It is claimed that when properly diluted, it does not cause any serious toxicity, however, the chemical is deadly when undiluted and can be very dangerous during dilution and mixing. There are no antidotes for paraquat, it causes damages to internal organs and have special affinity to the lungs. A larger dose of the concentrated form causes immediate damage to the kidneys and heart, the victim will die soon after. In smaller dose, it may cause relatively minor initial symptoms, seemingly little damage to the liver and kidneys, but the victim usually die of asphyxiation, due to irreversible lung damage. This is a slow, agonising and unpreventable death. This chemical can also be absorbed through the skin. To use diluted as a herbicide, Paraquat is known to affect the health of users, especially when the person is not using proper protective measures. For general information regarding Paraquat, kindly refer to (1), (2), (3).

In GoGo's case, she was on leash and never seen eating any bait, it is suspected that she might have sniffed around the tainted area or had some of the poison on her feet, which is absorbed into the body, or she ingested some by licking her feet. Her initial symptoms are vomiting and do not seem to be in distress. During the several days that she stayed in the clinic, she is anorexic, but remain alert all the time and can manage short walks. However, there is nothing that can be done except for supportive care. After two days on drip, her blood profile reflects that liver and kidney function improved. However, her panting got worse and she passed away in the clinic after staying for four nights, likely due to lung failure. She died one week after being poisoned. Seeing her suffering and eventually lost her life was heartbreaking.

On Lamma, it seems that the poison baits were placed on a pathway not far away from a kindergarten and primary school. It might have caused more tragedies had any children came into contact with the poison.

Paraquat is already banned in the EU(4). In the USA, Paraquat is classified for restricted use; it can only be used by licensed applicators (2). The main reason for banning in the EU and restrictions in USA is due to occupational risks for farmers and agricultural workers who may be exposed to the chemical resulting in chronic and acute health problems. In addition, Paraquat is a known common suicide chemical in third world countries. (6), (7).

To summarise, I would like to call for the banning of use and sales of Paraquat in Hong Kong for the following reasons:

- This poison has no antidote; even a small sip of the concentrated form that is sold can cause a long agonising death, with no treatment available.
- Initial Paraquat poisoning symptoms(of a relatively small dose) may be mild, easily mis-diagnosed as other minor ailments, but nonetheless fatal.
- The chemical being sold without restrictions is readily available to criminals to commit crimes against animals or even humans.
- The chemical is a potential suicide agent.
- Acute and chronic health problem is reported with regular use of Paraquat as a herbicide, mishandling may be fatal. The health of farmers and other workers that applies herbicide must be protected.
- Safer herbicide or other safe weed control measures should be sought, it is not justifiable to remove weeds with a chemical which can have irreversible fatal consequences.

Your help towards this matter is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Gisela Cheung

References:

(1) Toxipedia

<http://www.toxipedia.org/display/toxipedia/Paraquat>

(2) Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/paraquat/basics/facts.asp>

(3) Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paraquat>

(4)EU ruling for banning Paraquat in 2007

<http://www.evb.ch/en/p25012968.html>

(5) stop paraquat, by Berne Declaration

<http://www.evb.ch/en/p5001.html>

(6) Paraquat dossier by Berne Declaration

[http://www.stop-paraquat.net/data/EvB\\_Paraquat\\_Dossier\\_en.pdf](http://www.stop-paraquat.net/data/EvB_Paraquat_Dossier_en.pdf)

(7) Berne Declaration: Unacceptable Health Risk for Users

<http://www.pan-uk.org/pestnews/Actives/paraquat.htm>

(8) Pesticide Action Network article

<http://www.panna.org/blog/report-rome-paraquat-inches-closer-global-phaseout>

(9) Paraquat poisoning case in Hong Kong

<http://www.hkcem.com/html/publications/Journal/2006-3/p155-160.pdf>

(10) Paraquat dermal contact case in Hong Kong

<http://www.hkcem.com/html/publications/Journal/2011-4%20July/p258-263.pdf>

(11) Paraquat poisoning symptoms, with poisoning cases in China

<http://www.health-writings.com/paraquat-poisoning-symptoms/>

(12) Material Safety Data Sheet of Paraquat (Rygel Australia Pty Ltd)

<http://www.rygel.com.au/PDFs/MSDS/Rygel%20Paraquat%20250%20Herbicide%20-%20MSDS%20-%202001-10-2008.pdf>

(13) Apple Daily report regarding GoGo's case

[http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/template/apple/art\\_main.php?iss\\_id=20111005&sec\\_id=4104&subsec\\_id=11867&art\\_id=15675175](http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/template/apple/art_main.php?iss_id=20111005&sec_id=4104&subsec_id=11867&art_id=15675175)

This letter is sent via email to:

Dr. York Chow, GBS, JP, Secretary for Food and Health

Dr. P. Y. Lam, JP, Director of Health

Mr. Wong Chi-Kong, Alan, JP, Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation

Ms. Anissa Wong Sean-ye, JP, Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Director of Environment Protection

Panel for Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, Legislative Council

Members of the Legislative Council