



**Dr. Rebecca Johnson doesn't think peoples' memories provide accurate data for 2,4-D/illness studies.**

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(Agreement 50 percent of the time would occur just by guessing.)

"A lot of people reported using 2,4-D when, in fact, they had not used it," she says.

"We shouldn't be doing the types of studies we have been doing where we're relying on people to recall from memory what pesticides they used over a number of years," she said. Johnson is assistant professor in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of Minnesota.

Dow epidemiologist Dr. Geary W. Olsen is also critical of three prior NCI studies (Kansas, then Nebraska, and finally farm workers in Iowa/Minnesota), and also a canine study that linked 2,4-D exposure with cancers.

The findings of these studies—all relying on peoples' or proxies' memories—are contradicted by a Canadian study. That study followed the health of some Canadian farmers and their exposures from 1970 to 1985. Actually, it showed the farmers' cancer death rate being lower than the general population, notes Olsen.

The link between pesticides and farmer health is being investigated by yet another NCI study, the Agricultural Health Study, that will monitor the health of about than 110,000 farmers and their families in North Carolina and Iowa for the next 10 years.

"I think it will really dominate what's going to happen policy-wise with pesticides and epidemiology," says Olsen.

—R.H.

## Rave reviews for sterilized manure soil amendment

by James E. Guyette,  
Contributing Editor

**JACKSON, Ohio**—A soil amendment made from steam-sterilized horse manure is drawing praise from landscapers.

Known as Nea's Organic Compost or Nea's Posey Power (depending on the packaging), the manure first decomposes outdoors for 30 days. Weed seeds are then eliminated by steam sterilization. Additives include brewer's grain, gypsum, peat moss and lime.

The 80-day composting process is monitored by state-of-the-art computerized controls, according to Nea Henry, who is president of the southeastern Ohio firm.

"We came up with our own entire process, and it worked," she recalls. "The procedures are very exact."

The product, which contains no chemicals, has a number of applications, according to Henry:

- it rebuilds worn out soil;
- acts as a fertilizer;
- holds moisture during drought conditions;
- adds micro-organisms;
- breaks down clay soil;
- adds organic humus and builds up sandy soil.

At Ohio University in Athens, it was used to rebuild the athletic fields and golf greens. The product also was applied as a topdressing for new and established lawns and flower beds, plus it was used as a mulch around shrubs in the spring.

"We would highly recommend Nea's Organic Compost to anyone in this field," says Daniel H. Stright, OU's director of grounds maintenance.

Nea's "improves the structure of the soil remarkably and allows for better water-holding capacity and better air penetration in the clay soils we have in this area," he notes.

"This organic compost has the added value of being weed-free, and it is much cheaper than oak bark mulch," says Stright. He adds that the product is neutral as opposed to the bark's acid qualities.

"We have had many favorable comments on the fields, lawns and flower beds where the material has

been applied," Stright notes.

"Another great feature is the moisture-holding capacity," says Dave Junka, curator of the Franklin Park Conservatory and Garden Center in Columbus. "The same plants in beds without the compost required much more frequent waterings," he reports.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources uses the mixture for its wild-flower program and for reclaiming old strip mines. The AmeriFlora exhibit in Columbus added Nea's to its blended soils.

Pricing varies according to market-place. (A topdressing spreader custom-designed for the product sells for \$250.) Henry will deliver via dump truck and semi-load within 400 miles. Otherwise it's shipped in 30-pound bags.

Nea's compost was born in the mushroom industry. When she used the product on her father's crop, the yield was 6 lbs./sq.ft. when the national average for mushroom growing was just 1.79 lbs./sq.ft. Campbell's Soup was so impressed that it bought the company, but Henry kept the "super mix" patent.

It's hard to think of horse manure as high tech, but the conversion process also reduces the smell. The air used during processing is filtered just like in hospitals. The humidity, barometric pressure and temperature is continuously controlled.

For more information: NEA Inc., P.O. Box 706, Jackson, OH 45640; phone (614) 286-1322.



**Nea Henry says precision measurement plays a part in every batch of Posey Power compost.**