



Rush-Henrietta Central School District

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April 16, 2020

To the Rush Henrietta Board of Education,

In May 2010 the NYS legislature passed, and the governor signed into law, what is called the "Child Safe Playing Field Act". This is a ban on pesticide use on school athletic fields and playgrounds and went into effect on May 18th 2011 for schools. Along with specific exemptions to this ban that are cited in the text, the law allows for emergency pesticide applications if approved by the districts school board.

As a sports field manager, I would like to point out how this law has caused normally safe sports fields to become unplayable and treacherous. I feel this law is reckless and ill advised.

Unlike a home lawn where aesthetic is prized, the goal of sports field management is to provide a safe and playable surface. Dense turfgrass provides dependable traction for young athletes' feet. Strong healthy turfgrass roots won't blow out when a player stops fast or changes direction in an instant. Soccer balls roll best on a smooth, uniform turfgrass surface, baseballs take fewer bad hops and kids don't get hurt. Games are better!

Sports fields are subject to considerable amounts of use, abuse, and overuse throughout the year. Man-made and natural environmental stresses can cause sports field quality and health to diminish. Drought and other weather extremes, as well cyclical insect and plant disease pressures weaken even the best sports fields. When a stand of established turfgrass on a sports field begins to thin out, as sports fields are highly prone to, weeds move in quickly and the field begins to go into a state of decline. These problems often occur during the height of the playing season when the field is most needed.

For example, broadleaf weeds such as clover, dandelion, and plantain can out-compete stressed turfgrass leaving thin grass with little cushion for athletes. Also, invasive summer annual weeds such as crabgrass, goose grass, and prostrate knotweed are very problematic on intensely used sports fields. Left uncontrolled, the lifecycle of these weeds results in a persistent condition of bare soil during spring and fall, when many fields are in full use. Bare soil during the wet conditions causes dangerous footing and dry, bare soil is an extremely hard surface. Lawn care pesticides are tools that can be used to manage the encroachment of these weeds and thereby promote a more uniform, healthy turfgrass surface in lieu of the hazardous conditions associated with bare soil.



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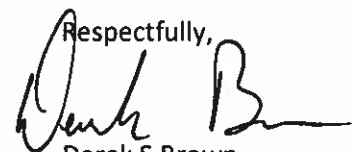
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White grubs are another detrimental pest to sports fields and severe damage to turfgrass can result in unsafe playing conditions and very costly renovation and repair procedures. Turfgrass damage, resulting from both white grubs feeding on roots, and the activity of racoons and skunks foraging for the grubs, can completely destroy a sports field, rendering the surface unsafe and unplayable. A properly timed pesticide application, best applied in the summer when most school fields are not in use can provide, effective, preventable control of these potentially devastating white grubs.

As good stewards of our environment, we need to be able to responsibly use all the tools available to us to prevent and treat turfgrass problems in a conscientious manner following all Integrated Pest Management guidelines, chemical and non-chemical. Certain lawn care pesticides, timed accordingly with irrigation or rainfall, can be used to quickly respond to pest problems to keep a field safe and open for play, as opposed to forcing field closure and performing costly repair and renovation measures. Having the option of using U.S. EPA registered products in accordance with their labels allows us, in part, to achieve our goal to keeping sports fields safe and playable.

I am not looking to implement an on-going spray program, rather what I am asking is for the school board to consider, according to the law, giving me special permission on a case by case basis to make a pesticide application at a time that a weed, insect, or disease problem gets out of hand and all non-chemical or cultural controls prove to be ineffective or cost prohibitive. Any pesticide application has always been, and will continue to be, made on off-hours and/or off days, and never when children are present. All materials are applied by NYS licensed pesticide applicators using U.S. EPA approved products, at minimum label rates, and only when and where necessary.

I would invite the opportunity to discuss this further if anyone has any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,


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