

“Weed ‘n Feed” Products - Why You Should Not Use Them

These Products Have Been Banned in Canada

Weed ‘n Feed products are a combination of herbicides (usually a **combination of 2.4-D, dicamba and mecoprop**) and a **synthetic fertilizer** used to strengthen lawns and eliminate weeds such as dandelions and other broadleaf plants. While they are heavily marketed and widely sold as a convenience product, there are many reasons why they should be avoided including ineffectiveness over time and some real environmental and health issues. Reasons to avoid them include:

- 1) **Uneven, excessive application.** Herbicides applied in this manner are applied over the entire lawn, not just in the sites where needed. It has been estimated that use of these products **results in using 20 to 30 times more herbicide** than is needed.
- 2) **“Weed ‘n feed” products can pollute water resources.** Quick-release fertilizers are more apt to wash off when watered in, ending up in storm drains, near-by streams, the water table, or your well.
- 3) **Birds, bees and other pollinators are put at risk.** Birds eat these granule products (as grit), thereby subjecting them to toxic chemicals leading to significant **bird deaths**. Since 70% of native bees are ground-nesters, **bees are also put at risk** from the use of these chemicals.
- 4) **“Weed ‘n Feed” chemicals are easily tracked indoors.** These chemicals cling to shoes and children’s clothing and are introduced into the home environment where they persist. The dust is also carried by the wind into adjacent yards.
- 5) **There are health risks associated with synthetic herbicides.** The weed killers used in these products are persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic substances linked to cancers and to reproductive, immunological and neurological problems. 2,4-D for example has been linked to increased rates of cancer in people and dogs.

The good news is that there are **safer, more effective alternatives**. Building a healthy, organic lawn is the best way to choke out weeds. Using a pre-emergent such as corn gluten meal and using physical intervention (hand pulling) are just two examples of safe weed control methods.

