Atrazine Found in Water Supply of 30 Million Americans

Glyphosate isn't the only harmful herbicide in the water supply. An investigation from the Environmental Working Group (EWG) found that atrazine, a Syngenta product used on corn, sugarcane, and lawns, is in the tap water of over 30 million people in the U.S. 76 millions pounds of atrazine were sprayed in 2014, making it the second most commonly used herbicide (after glyphosate) in the United States. Several studies have identified the chemical as an endocrine disruptor, and it has also been linked to cancer and birth defects. The new EWG study is only a snapshot of how hard it is to avoid atrazine.

> *EWG's Tap Water Database, which aggregates water testing data from utilities nationwide, shows that nearly 30 million Americans in 28 states have some level of atrazine in their tap water. Environmental Protection Agency data for 2017 show late-spring and early-summer spikes of atrazine in drinking water commonly are three to seven times higher than the federal legal limit, but these exceedances are not reported to people in the affected communities…"*

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Previous Litigation and Discovery

Syngenta is aware of the problems with atrazine and water contamination. In 2012, Syngenta was sued by 23 cities and towns in the Midwest. These municipalities alleged that Syngenta knew about but didn't inform their communities about atrazine and its potential for groundwater contamination. Syngenta settled that class-action suit for 105 million

dollars, enough to properly filter the atrazine from the towns water sources. The company did not admit any fault and maintains that atrazine is safe.

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Even if that is the case, many areas where the herbicide is used (the most commonly treated crop is corn) are still drinking far more than the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended maximum amount of 3.4 parts per billion of atrazine in surface water. Atrazine doesn't break down readily in water. According to the chemical's toxicological profile issued by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry,

> *Atrazine tends to persist in surface and groundwater, with a moderate tendency to bind to sediments. Slow or no biodegradation occurs in surface water or groundwater environments, respectively…Depending on the availability of sunlight, oxygen, microorganisms, and plants, the half-life of atrazine in water tends to be longer than 6 months; in some cases, no degradation of atrazine has been observed in aquatic systems."*

There are some serious issues linked to atrazine and many questions surround its health and environmental implications.

Municipalities in states like Nebraska and Wisconsin shut down wells during peak atrazine season, typically in the spring. Multiple studies have linked it to disrupted growth, behavior, immune function, and gonadal development in fish and amphibians. A study from the University of Kentucky found a high likelihood of a connection between atrazine exposure and premature births. The Centers for Disease Control lists congestion of heart, lungs, and kidneys, low blood pressure, muscle spasms, weight loss, and damage to adrenal glands as potential side effects of atrazine exposure above the maximum

contaminant level for short periods of time. Use of the herbicide was banned in the European Union in 2004.

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Atrazine Needs to Be Examined

Atrazine, while effective at killing, weeds, has not been definitively proven to be safe for the environment or public health. Syngenta has thrown millions at the EPA and succeeded in having it declared otherwise. Yet the company was unable to prove the same thing to the European Union in 2004.

This news makes me sad for the farmers. To make a profit on the nutritionally-deficient crops they grow, they spray them in large quantities of harmful chemicals that then leach into their water supply. Make a living to live what kind of life?

Sources:

- *A Hormone-Disrupting Weed Killer May Be In Your Tap Water. Here's What to Do About It* – Environmental Working Group
- *A Valuable Reputation* – The New Yorker
- *Atrazine* – Living History Farm
- *'Strict' pesticide rules fail to erase threat to Wisconsin's drinking water* – Channel 3000
- *Atrazine Exposure in Public Drinking Water and Preterm Birth* – NCBI
- *Potential for Human Exposure* – ATSDR
- *Community Water* – CDC.gov