Company defends profitable poisons

Mar 28, 2013 by Medha Chandra

Did you know it was Poison Prevention Week last week? It is ironic that as we marked this week, we also grappled with the news that for the first time in nearly 20 years, a company went to court to challenge a decision by EPA to cancel one of their products — a pesticide that causes thousands of accidental poisonings each year.

Earlier this month Reckitt Benckiser — manufacturer of d-Con rat control products — filed a challenge against EPA's decision to cancel specific over-the-counter rodenticide products, which are hazardous for children, pets and wildlife. No hearing date has been set, but the appeal could potentially drag on for years. Meanwhile, the products remain on the market.

As described in earlier blogs, EPA made the decision to ban second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides after Reckitt Benckiser refused to accept the voluntary cancellation of these dangerous rodenticides. Parents, wildlife lovers and pet owners welcomed this action from the EPA as it would prevent accidental poisonings by these rodent control products.

These products poison an estimated 12,000-15,000 kids in the U.S. every year. Thousands of pets and non-target animals like bobcats, foxes and birds like raptors also suffer accidental poisonings.

People against corporate greed

The public interest law firm Earthjustice may intervene in the case in defense of EPA's position. Efforts are also ongoing in the state of California to obtain new, significant restrictions on these rodenticides, with a coalition of health, wildlife and environmental organizations working together to make it happen.

Attorney Greg Loarie from Eathjustice, who is helping to lead the California challenge, reacted strongly to the latest development

> Reckitt Benckiser's goal is to keep pushing products that are poisoning our children and decimating our wildlife, despite the fact that many safe alternatives for controlling pests exist. We're not going to sit back and let Reckitt put corporate profit over public welfare.

California has been at the forefront of this fight for safer rodent control. Back in 2011 the city of San

Francisco reached out to retailers asking them to voluntarily stop selling these particular rodent control products in the city.

Safer rodent control

The company's rodent control products are not unique and almost 30 other companies making similar products have already voluntarily agreed to adopt the safety measures suggested by EPA. The agency has suggested safer rodent control products for consumers, as well as made recommendations for how to tackle rodent problems.

Here's hoping that the courts recognize this challenge by Reckitt Benckiser for what it is — a blatant effort to earn profits from poisons that harm our children, our pets and endangered wildlife. By the time Poison Prevention Week rolls around next year, this should be one less poison we have to worry about!

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