

Testing proves biosolid unsafe

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SHARRI MARKSON AND
CAROLINE MARCUS

EXCLUSIVE tests reveal salmonella and Third World parasites are present in human faeces fertiliser spread on farms, even after it has been treated, leading to calls for foods grown with the substance to be banned from supermarket shelves.

Despite NSW Health insisting the partially-treated human sludge, known as biosolids, is safe when guidelines are adhered to, independent tests of two samples found salmonella, the parasite blastocystis, usually found in filthy water in the Third World, and a virulent bug that can cause infections which are potentially fatal.

The Sunday Telegraph's expose on biosolids has found the fertiliser is used on 20 wheat, canola and oats farms in NSW and there are new claims it is being used on vegetable and dairy farms in Queensland.

A worker, accused of raising health concerns about biosolids, was stood down on Thursday by the country's largest distributor, Arkwood Organic Recycling, and a second worker has been threatened with the sack for allegedly escorting a union official to a biosolid-smear pasture where cattle were grazing.

Transport Workers Union national secretary Tony Sheldon, whose members have reported illness through contact with the human waste-fertiliser, said: "If there is produce coming from these

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BIOSOLIDS BEING
USED ON YOUR
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farms and hitting the shelves of Coles and Woolworths then it has to be clearly labelled so families can make an informed decision on whether they want to play Russian roulette with their health at the family table.

"In this industry we've seen workers bullied, threatened and sacked for whistle-blowing. The environment department is slow to act and the fair work ombudsman has refused to prosecute employers."

Glen Pinna, general manager of Biotech Laboratories, which did the tests, said the fertiliser is a biohazard.

"I would have concerns for anyone who used it directly on crops and I would be very concerned if this material was used as fertiliser," he said.

"As far as at least these bugs go, the treatment process is not eradicating them. These biosolids shouldn't have contact with anything that is likely to find its way into the food chain or the drinking water system."

Past president of the Australian Medical Association Kerry Phelps said there needs to be an independent inquiry into the program nationally: "This is a cover-up of a major public health situation".

The For Earth Probiotic Low Energy Aeration System can significantly reduce the need to dispose of sludge off site from the Sewerage Plant. Sludge is biologically treated within the pond reducing the use of centrifuges and sludge drying beds. A solution to the problem in the article (left).

Contact For Earth for more information.

Tel: 61 02 658143

E: shanem@forearth.com.au