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### THINK TWICE ABOUT USING LAWN CHEMICALS THIS SPRING

County Executive Andy Spano today encouraged residents to think twice before using lawn chemicals to kill weeds, insects or to grow greener grass this spring.

“What you put on your lawn and garden this spring could ultimately end up in your drinking water,” cautioned Spano. “Spring and summer rains wash excess fertilizers and pesticides into the reservoirs that Westchester relies on for drinking water. People who get their water from wells may find that pesticides and fertilizers spread on their lawns or their neighbors lawns end up in their drinking water,” he continued.

“This spring, before you buy your first bag of lawn fertilizer or sign a contract with your lawn care company, visit our website for useful tips on having a healthy lawn and garden without polluting our waterways and drinking water,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County.

Residents are also encouraged to take part in Westchester’s third annual *No Pesticides Day* on May 8, which coincides with this year’s first *Household Chemical Clean-Up* event to be held at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park in Yorktown Heights on May 7 and 8. For a list of acceptable items and directions to the site, residents should call the Household Chemical Info-Line at (914) 813-5425.

The Health Department’s website, [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health), has an extensive section on pesticide use reduction and links to sites that offer tips for healthy lawns and gardens with fewer or no chemicals. Some of these tips include:

- Avoid trampling the lawn while it’s muddy – wait until it dries out
- Seed bare spots early to prevent weeds from growing

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- Use corn gluten fertilizer to crowd out weeds
- Delay fertilizer use until after Memorial Day or try going without it

Some residents overuse pesticides in an attempt to reduce the tick population. Fortunately, there are several non-toxic approaches that can be taken to help prevent you from contracting tick-borne diseases, including landscape management techniques such as:

- Keeping your grass cut short.
- Removing leaf litter and debris where ticks can thrive.
- Creating a three-foot barrier of wood chips between your lawn and areas with bushy vegetation.

There are also personal protective measures that you can take to help minimize your risk of being bitten by ticks. They include:

- Doing tick checks each and every time you and your family return home from enjoying outdoor activities such as gardening, hiking and picnicking. Inspect your entire body (adults should do the checking for children) and remove any ticks found promptly.
- Covering up when outdoors in wooded or grassy areas. Ticks cannot bite through clothing, so create a "wall of clothes" by tucking your shirt into your pants and tucking your pants into your socks.
- Wearing lightly colored, tightly woven clothing. The light color will enable you to see any ticks that may be on your clothing. The tight weave will make it more difficult for ticks to latch onto you.

Since taking office in 1998, County Executive Spano has taken numerous steps to reduce the use of pesticides in the county. At his urging, the Neighbor Notification Law was enacted in Westchester County on March 1, 2001. The law requires that:

- Commercial pesticide applicators provide at least 48 hours advanced notice to neighbors within 150 feet of any commercial pesticide application;
- Property owners inform occupants at least 24 hours in advance about pesticide application to abutting properties;
- Individuals post lawn markers when independently applying pesticides to more than 100 sq. feet of their property;

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- Retailers post signs in close proximity to pesticide products that instruct applicators to comply with the notification requirements.

Another component of the County's pesticide use reduction initiative has been the phasing out of pesticide use on County properties under the *Sunset Legislation*. Through guidance from the Westchester Pest Management Committee, with a few exceptions or exemptions allowed by the law, Westchester County properties have been pesticide free since January 1, 2003.

Pesticide is a generic term for insecticides, herbicides and fungicides designed to kill or control pest insects, weeds and fungal disease. All pesticides are toxic to some degree. Widely used pesticides and fertilizers play a role in killing fish and aquatic life, either directly or through the promotion of algae blooms which suffocate water bodies like the Long Island Sound.

Also of concern are data that suggest that some common pesticides may be "endocrine disrupters" that have the potential to disturb normal hormone activity and possibly threaten the health of children and future generations. Suspected endocrine-disrupting pesticides include lindane, carbaryl, permethrin, aldicarb, maneb, zineb, endosulfan, methoxychlor, toxaphene and dieldrin. Many of these pesticides are readily available at hardware and garden stores and nurseries.

For more information about lawn chemicals, integrated pest management and tick-borne diseases, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).