

accumulated through the food chain. Twenty years later, people started noticing dead and stranded California sea lions. When examined, 20 percent of the sea lions were found to have cancer of the urinary and genital tracts and toxic chemicals in their blubber that had accumulated through the anchovies, squid, salmon and mussels they ate.”

Cancer in Dogs

A study of more than 8,000 dogs showed that canine bladder cancer was associated with their living in industrialized counties, mimicking the distribution of bladder cancer among humans. Between 1975 and 1995 the incidence of bladder cancer in dogs examined at veterinary teaching schools in North America increased six-fold. Scottish terriers, Shetland sheepdogs, wirehaired fox terriers and West Highland white terriers had a higher risk than mixed breeds, suggesting a genetic susceptibility to cancer among the terriers, but not a reason for the increase.

When the researchers interviewed the owners of Scottish terriers with bladder cancer, they found that dogs whose owners had used phenoxy acid herbicides on their lawns were 4 to 7 times more likely to have cancer than dogs whose owners had not. 6 Phenoxy acid is an active ingredient in 2,4-D, a widely used herbicide that has been linked to cancers, neurological impairment and reproductive problems.’

The “cancer in dogs” studies reveal the multifactorial nature of cancer. Their cancer is linked to the use of insecticidal flea and tick dips, but more so if the dogs were obese and lived near another source of pesticides.⁸ In the terrier study, the researchers found that when the Scotties ate green leafy vegetables three times a week, there was a 90 percent reduction in their risk of cancer.

Danger Ahead

We need to ring all the alarm bells about the accumulation of chemical wastes in the bodies of wildlife. The fire-retardant chemicals known as PDBEs have been found in every fish sampled in San Francisco Bay. They are similar to PCBs in their chemical structure, and the levels found in breast, blood and breast-milk samples of U.S. women are the highest in the world. Is it a coincidence that women in San Francisco also have the highest levels of breast cancer anywhere?

PDBEs have been linked to an array of adverse health effects, including the possibility of cancer. When Sweden noticed a 60-fold increase of PDBEs in human breast milk between 1972 and 1997, it led to a ban throughout the European Union. In the San Francisco Bay area, the level in breast milk is 12 to 300 times higher than it was in Sweden, but the chemical industry has blocked California’s attempts to legislate.

We have to fight back, if we want to regain our health and the health of the world’s wildlife.

Adapted from *101 Solutions to a Preventable Epidemic* (New Society, 2007) by Guy Dauncey, Liz Armstrong and Anne Wordsworth

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