

SUSPECTED HERBICIDE SPRAY DAMAGE

Introduction

Plants and trees can be damaged by herbicides. This can be accidental such as spray drift from a neighbouring property or the spray tank has not been washed out correctly, or the damage can be intentional or malicious where the plants or trees have been deliberately sprayed possibly with very high levels of the herbicides.

What has the plant/tree been sprayed with?

In order to determine what testing would be appropriate we need an idea of what may have been sprayed. In the case of possible spray drift have a chat to the neighbour and ask what they have sprayed recently. For suspected spray tank issue check with the contractor and find out what they last had in the tank.

For intentional damage it is much harder to determine the herbicide used as the possible culprits may not be forthcoming with this information. If the damage has been done in an urban environment then glyphosate may have been used as this can be bought from any hardware store. Glyphosate will also kill the grass around the plants.

If still in doubt it may pay to contact an arborist who should be able to confirm if the damage is from herbicide spray or disease/ nutrient deficiency. Also check for any drill holes around the base, particularly in large trees.

Suspected intentional damage

If you suspect intentional damage it is critical that you note this on the request form, along with a phone number that we can contact you on for more information. Our laboratory is a trace level laboratory. We are looking for pesticide residues in the parts per trillion level (ppt) and a high level sample can cause major contamination issues in the laboratory and possibly irreparable damage to our instruments. We have procedures to deal with high level sample in another area of the lab. If you are unsure please call us.

If there is a chance that the results may be used in a court case please write "Possible Prosecution" on the analysis request form.

What part of the plant/tree should be sent for analysis?

Ideally we would like about 300g of plant material. This should be leaf material as we are unable to test bark, twigs or other woody parts. The samples can be submitted in a zip lock bag or similar. Please remove any soil from the plants.

How long after spraying can residues be detected?

This will depend on a number of factors – the rate at which it was sprayed, weather conditions and the plant type. We can only test and see.

Testing may detect herbicides have been used but is unable to determine when they were sprayed or by whom.

Contact Details

For further information please contact our Client Service Managers: fnb.csm@hill-labs.co.nz or phone 07 858 2000.