



ASSOCIATION OF VETERINARY AND CROP ASSOCIATIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA  
VERENIGING VAN DIEREGESONDHEIDS- EN PLANTBESKERMINGSVERENIGINGS VAN SUID-AFRIKA  
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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **TAKING RESPONSIBLE PEST MANAGEMENT TO NEW LEVELS IN GROBLERSDAL**

**EMBARGO: IMMEDIATE**

#### **STARTS**

Groblersdal is one of South Africa's most intensive agricultural areas and produces citrus, cereals, grapes, deciduous fruit and vegetables. Allegations of pesticide poisoning made by a medical practitioner in Groblersdal sent shivers through the region and generated fears amongst the citizenry of health issues related to the application of pesticides. The claims of pesticide impacts have to date not been substantiated by scientifically sound toxicological or clinical evidence. Farmers around Groblersdal have their farm workers tested regularly for signs of pesticide poisoning and reported that no evidence was found in recent tests. Other medical practitioners in the area also fail to find any evidence to corroborate the claims.

The Association of Veterinary and Crop Associations of South Africa (AVCASA) that represents the pesticide industry is gravely concerned about the unfounded claims and have commissioned the Plant Protection Research Institute of the Agriculture Research Council to conduct a research project over four agricultural seasons in order to establish whether there is biologically significant pesticide fall out in the area. This study will commence within a few days. Other studies aimed at establishing whether people in the Groblersdal area display any clinical symptoms of acute or chronic pesticide exposure may also be conducted soon.

AVCASA is joining hands with the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Health, the Department of Water and Forestry, the Department of Education and the farming community to inform the people of Groblersdal during the week of 28 July to 1 August about pesticides, their function and particularly about the safe and responsible use of pesticides. The event is launched on Monday 28 July 2008 from 08h00 to 14h00 at the Loskop Valley Lodge east of Groblersdal. Presentations by different agricultural organizations and state departments will be made during the week.

In order to counter the fears and misconceptions about pesticides and their application, AVCASA plans to initiate a Groblersdal Community Liaison Forum in the very near future. The aim of such a forum is for the agricultural community to engage the townsfolk and stakeholders in positive talks and information sharing about agriculture. Many of the farmers are certified by GlobalGap to ensure that top quality and safe food is exported to the European Union. These farmers have to abide by strict codes of conduct including the responsible use of pesticides. It is therefore understandable that these farmers are disturbed by the claims made by the said medical practitioner.

AVCASA became aware of the illegal application of lindane by a pest control operator at a local school in Groblersdal and reported the incident to the Department of Agriculture for investigation hopeful to see the perpetrators prosecuted. The organization warns everyone who uses pesticides that it will not hesitate to report culprits who misuse and use pesticides illegally to the authorities for prosecution. There is no place in the market for individuals or companies that misuse pesticides.

AVCASA invites members of the public to report any pesticide misuse and crimes committed with pesticides to the Griffon Poison Information Centre 082-446-8946.

AVCASA offers a suit of publications on safe and responsible use of pesticides, treatment of pesticide poisoning, guidelines for safe transportation and safe warehousing. It also offers an advisory services on responsible pest management to farmers, home owners, gardeners, industry and state departments via the Griffon Poison Information Centre to ensure that the environment and people are not compromised by pesticide application.

For further information please contact:

Mr Tom Mabesa, Executive Director AVCASA at 082-657-5329 or

Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, Griffon Poison Information Centre at 082-446-8946.

**ENDS**