



ABN 67 104 140 918

A: 60 Leicester St, Carlton Vic 3053

T: 03 9347 4500 / 1300 133 868

F: 03 9341 8199

E: info@geneethics.org

W: www.geneethics.org

Rogue GM canola found on roadsides, eaten by sheep

Friday, 17 September, 2010: Feral GM canola weeds have been discovered on roadsides in Western Victoria. Canola farmer Geoff Carracher discovered the GM canola weeds and sent them to Gene Ethics for testing, which showed up positive.

The GM contamination has already started spreading further: upon a later inspection of the GM canola weeds, near Bringalbert, north of Apsley, Mr Carracher, from the Network of concerned Farmers, noticed some of them had been eaten by nearby sheep.

"These rogue GM plants are probably from seed spilt on the way to the GrainCorp grain dump at Lillimur last year," says Mr Carracher. "The Lillimur site was also contaminated when GM canola was dumped in a non-GM bin.

"The feral plants infest more than 100 metres of roadside and should be eradicated before they set seed as the GM contamination will spread."

West Wimmera Shire has asked the Department of Primary Industries to clarify who is responsible to clean up, but their response is not known. In 2008 when numerous GM canola weeds were found on roadsides near Horsham, requests to the Shire, Main Roads and the Agriculture Minister's office got no response. Local farmers had a working bee to pull up and bag the plants for destruction.

Gene Ethics Executive Director Bob Phelps says: "Monsanto's patented weeds are the company's responsibility but governments here have not enforced the cleanup against them. State governments license polluters and have profitable public private partnerships with them so there is no action.

"In North Dakota, United States, where feral GM canola is widely dispersed in all environments, Monsanto covers the cost of removing the weeds. In California, it also issues free test kits so farmers can check if they have the company's GM canola on their properties without a licence."

Mr Carracher concludes: "Only 8% of the Australian canola crop is now GM but If GM canola weeds spread, many GM-free farmers will be out of business. The GM-free canola premium of \$15 per tonne reflects the strong GM-free preferences of shoppers."

Further information or comment:

Vivienne Reiner, Gene Ethics media officer: (02) 9440 3545, 0432 352 132

Geoff Carracher, Network of Concerned Farmers: (03) 5386 6261