

Cropwatch Media Release – Tuesday November 18, 2008

GM canola has wings

GM Cropwatch technician Jessica Harrison photographed pink and grey galahs feasting on a GM canola crop near the Horsham-Natimuk Road on Friday (pics available). GM canola grower Geoff Rethus had windrowed his crop that week.

"Birds are just one of myriad ways that GM canola seed is spread across the landscape," Ms Harrison says.

"Foxes, hares and other feral animals, as well as kangaroos, water and the wind, are some other ways that GM contamination is spread," says GM-free canola grower Geoffrey Carracher, Minimay.

Cropwatch's Harrison and Network of Concerned Farmers Carracher are monitoring and testing for GM canola spills on roadsides and farms around the western district.

"After windrowed canola is cut and laid down to dry, wind gusts often lift up whole rows and dump the plants meters or even miles away," Mr Carracher says.

"The first Victorian commercial GM canola harvest is under way and it will contaminate our rural environments.

"Though fewer than one in a thousand farmers grew Monsanto's GM canola this year, they pose an unacceptable threat of GM contamination.

"They and the Brumby government have thumbed their noses at the GM-free majority and threaten our livelihoods," he says.

"Graincorp's Lubeck silo near Horsham and Warracknabeal is the main contamination hot spot," Ms Harrison says.

"The silo will receive GM seed from all of the Wimmera and Mallee GM sites but the depot is poorly designed to manage GM canola contamination.

"Last week Graincorp staff scrambled to erect temporary barriers against the natural elements.

*Strong winds in the Lubeck area may spread GM canola seed into neighbouring wheat and canola crops.

"Yet Monsanto takes no responsibility at all for GM contamination caused by its patented seed.

"The company will be the main winner from GM canola.

"They charge high up front fees, inflated prices for seed and herbicide, then end-point-royalties on the harvest for which farmers are paid the same as for GM-free canola.

"Monsanto has hung GM-free farmers, beekeepers, grain harvesters and shoppers out to dry.

"Brumby's total neglect of GM-free rural industries will cost the ALP dearly at the next election," Ms Harrison concludes.

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Pictures available on request.