Rat Poison Alert

Does the Bush administration favor big business over kids?

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In 2005, a Harlem environmental group took the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to court for failing to protect the public health. The Clinton administration had required rat poisons to be brightly colored and bitterly flavored to protect kids from accidentally eating them. The Bush administration re- -versed these rules—to make the pellets work better and protect property, it claimed. Now, poisoning cases among black and Latino children are way up, says the *Washington Post*.

“It’s profit,” says Peggy M. Shephard, executive director of West Harlem Environmental Action, the group battling the EPA. “Manufacturers don’t want to make a safer alternative.” Kevin Osterhoudt, MD, of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, sees many rat poisoning cases each year. “The poisons are blood thinners, making rats bleed internally,” and they do the same to people, he says. If kids eat the pellets, their skin may bruise easily or they may bleed from the nose, gums and internal organs. But the effects may be delayed, so the child may appear normal.

You can help your child avoid rat poison by pointing it out and explaining its dangers. If you think your child has eaten poison, call Poison Control (800.222.1222). If the child isn’t breathing or seems intoxicated, dial 9-1-1.

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