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Study finds high exposure to glyphosate in manatees

The Florida Manatee is like a mascot of sorts for the state of Florida.

But for a creature so many love to see, it has a lot to overcome.

From red tide and boat strikes to chemical exposure, Florida manatees have to deal with a lot. And now, a [scientific study reveals](#) that since 2009, manatees have increasingly been exposed to glyphosate and AMPA (a chemical compound).

No connection has been made between this study and the manatee mortalities in 2021.

The samples taken from the manatees are from at least a year ago.

The herbicide glyphosate is found in Roundup. Researchers say it is also used to ripen sugarcane and to spray aquatic plants.

The presence of the herbicide glyphosate in manatee's plasma is disheartening, said Jaclyn Lopez, the Florida Director for the Center for Biological Diversity.

"It doesn't go away," Lopez said. "It stays in our environment."

The paper, published in "Environment International," includes work from the University of Florida.

"We didn't really expect to find it, because it's supposed to break down pretty easily," said Dr. Nancy Denslow, professor at the UF College of Veterinary Medicine, Center for Environmental and Human Toxicology.

The study said manatees were continuously exposed to glyphosate and the chemical compound AMPA in 2019 and 2020.

"These are animals that we routinely monitor for health assessments," Denslow said. "They were healthy at the time that we took the samples."

She said there is no relationship with the death of the manatees recently.

Glyphosate was found in 55.8% of manatee's plasma sampled. And the sea cow's exposure to the chemical has increased since 2009.

"We need to really rethink how we go about treating our lawns treating toxic or treating weeds, treating crops and think of a new way of doing business," Lopez said.

However, the study also found glyphosate and AMPA in waters isolated from sugarcane fields.

While the manatees appeared to be fine while sampling, the study said chronic exposure could affect manatee's immune systems which could be detrimental during red tide or cold stress.

Judy Sanchez, U.S. Sugar spokeswoman, questioned the study's authenticity.

"This is obviously a deeply flawed study, and its lead author apparently received scholarship funding from an activist group with a well-known anti-farming agenda. The manatees in question were located in Georgia, North Central Florida and Brevard County—nowhere near our sugarcane fields. Our farmers are not listening to these senseless attacks. We are staying focused on growing food for American families, providing good jobs for Florida and helping our neighbors during this global pandemic."