

## Something in the air

# Ragweed pollen plague a sure sign of autumn

By ALEX NEWMAN

There's something in the air. And it's not spring or election fever.

Anyone who is familiar with that tickling in the nostrils, the constant urge to sneeze, the watery eyes, knows the dreaded ragweed pollen plague has struck.

Hay fever, the common term used to describe these symptoms, differs from person to person, depending on the particular plant or substance to which they're allergic.

According to Dr. Owen Slingerland, medical officer with York Region, anywhere an abundance of ragweed grows the incidence of allergic reaction increases at this time of year.

Ragweed is a particularly potent pollen producer, explaining why hay fever sufferers notice their symptoms more now from mid-August until the first frost.

A lot of fields in York Region, owned by developers, lie

uncultivated, an open invitation for the growth of ragweed, says Dr. Slingerland. "This region, however, is really no worse than others."

In some regions, bylaws enforce the cutting of these fields, even that does not completely eliminate hay fever suffering.

But ragweed is not the only substance which causes hay fever. "Anything that produces pollen will trigger the symptoms," says Dr. Slingerland.

"I've seen showers of pollen from evergreen trees with cones, pine in particular," said Dr. Slingerland. "But spring and summer grasses, mould and mildew, all these contribute to allergies."

Damp weather or damp areas of a house encourage the growth of mould. "Whether the mould is apparent to the naked eye or not," adds Dr. Slingerland, the spores are in the air.

An allergic reaction is the result of an allergen (like pol-

len) being inhaled or ingested. Antibodies trigger the release of histamine, which causes mucus membrane of nose and eyes to swell, leading to sneezing, itchy eyes, and so on.

Antihistamines will control the unpleasant symptoms of hay fever — the runny nose and sneezing — says Dr. Slingerland, but are not a cure.

Drowsiness is often a side effect of antihistamines, and even drugs which claim to be non-sedating can sometimes have that affect, according to a brochure put out by Smithkline Consumer Products.

Antihistamines may also stimulate the appetite, resulting in weight gain.

Dr. Slingerland suggests instead allergy testing, followed by weekly allergy shots for those who really suffer.

"Testing for allergies is helpful in identifying exactly what a person is allergic to, so that weekly serums may be administered," he says. "The testing process is not at all painful, just a skin scratch," he adds.

## Flee strangers, youngsters told

By SGT. ROD SINE  
York Regional Police

Children — this column is for you.

A little boy is being offered a package of sweets by a stranger. What should he do? To find out the right thing to do, read this column.

A stranger is a person you do not know. It can be a man or a woman, young or old, fat or thin, short or tall, black, brown, yellow or white, pretty or ugly, rich or poor.

Nearly all people are nice and like children, but sometimes there are people who are sick in the mind and want to hurt you.

People you know, like your brothers and sisters, friends who play at the house, and your mother and father's friends, your grandparents, your teachers, are safe. But it is wisest to avoid people you do not know because you cannot tell what they are like.

Never get into a car with a stranger. They may not take you home, but to somewhere you don't know. Never hitchhike either.

When asked for directions answer politely, but do not go too near the car. If you do not know the answer, say so and walk away.

Never take sweets, presents or money from a stranger. They might be very kind but on the other hand they could be

trying to trick you into making friends.

If the stranger has a car, try and remember the color, the make and most importantly, the licence number. If you do not have any paper and a pencil with you, try to scratch the number on the pavement with a stone, or in the dust with a stick, or even write it on your hand.

When you run away from a stranger, or say no to a ride or a present, you will arrive home safe. But always tell your parents and ask them to tell the police, just in case the person is dangerous. Another child may not be as lucky as you.

The police are there to help you, and you will never get into any trouble by telling them about people who bother you. Also, tell the manager of a picture theatre, or a bus driver, if anyone there bothers you.

Do not go with people who say there were sent by your mother or father to pick you up, unless you know them. Always ask your parents how you should get home, and make sure you know what any person whom your mother has arranged to pick up, looks like.

If you do not understand any of these rules, ask your parents to explain them to you.

Sgt. Sine heads the York Regional Police Community Relations Bureau.

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