A

Agent Orange

Ben Dodsworth

PM&R, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL,
USA

Synonyms

None

Definition

A tactical herbicide and defoliant (chemical used to remove leaves from trees and plants) employed by the US military during the Vietnam War during “Operation Ranch Hand.” It was sprayed from aircraft with the purpose of depriving the enemies of food and removing dense tropical foliage that provided enemy cover. The name was derived

from the orange stripe that identified the large drums in which it was stored. It was composed of two active ingredients: 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T). Studies involving US military personnel have linked exposure to these chemicals with higher incidence of various cancers, diabetes, heart disease, Parkinson’s disease, and other medical issues ([US Department of Veterans Affairs](#)).

See Also

► [Parkinson’s Disease](#)

References and Readings

US Department of Veterans Affairs. Facts About Herbicides. Retrieved January 24, 2017, from <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/basics.asp>.