



Mr Jeffrey Hollender
Chief Inspired Protagonist
Seventh Generation
60 Lake Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401
United States of America

26 October 2009

Dear Mr Hollender,

Re: Misleading Claim - Natural Laundry Detergent 'safe for greywater systems'

As the leading consumer advocacy group in Australia, with 200,000 members, CHOICE campaigns to protect and assist consumers through changes to laws and industry practices. Our fair and unbiased reporting and testing on consumer products and services helps consumers find the right product for their needs and budget.

CHOICE recently tested washing powders. One of the test criteria is 'OK for the garden'. This is defined as: suitable for intermittent use on a home garden or lawn with an area of 150m²-200m². These detergents have low salinity (<2dS/m), sodium (<20g/wash), relatively low pH (<10.8) and low phosphorus <1g/wash) when diluted with 60L for front-loading detergents and 115L for top-loading ones.

Your product claims to be 'safe for septic tanks and grey water systems', yet according to our testing your product generates wash water that is not safe for use as greywater (see enclosed test results published in enclosed copy of CHOICE Magazine November 2009, page 45-47). All other products in our test which made a general greywater safe claim, met this criteria. Two products made a claim specifying that only the rinse water was suitable for greywater use.

The parameters by which Seventh Generation determines greywater safety, which are displayed on your website¹, neglect to cover total salinity, a critical determinant of the suitability of the water for use on a garden.

Based on our test results we believe the claim that Seventh Generation Natural Laundry Detergent (powder) is safe for grey water is misleading.

¹ <http://www.seventhgeneration.com/products/about-greywater-systems>



CHOICE is working to improve the access consumers have to sustainable products. CHOICE sometimes highlights 'green buys' (see attached test). These are products that perform well, are reasonably priced and meet environmental criteria. Although our test found your product cleaned very well and was reasonably priced; its poor Total Dissolved Solids score and unsuitability for greywater use, meant that it couldn't be recommended to consumers as a green buy.

In the interests of consumers who seek access to sustainable products that make good quality environmental claims, CHOICE believes Seventh Generation and Good Natured (the representative of Seventh Generation in Australia) need to take the following steps:

1. Immediately cease making the misleading claim about greywater safety.
2. Revise your criteria to include Total Salinity (<2dS/m).
3. Reformulate your product to improve greywater safety, and achieve a Total Dissolved Solids score of <40g/wash.

CHOICE takes misleading green claims very seriously. Your prompt action on this matter is appreciated. Please feel free to contact me on +612 9577 3374 or knorris@choice.com.au if you have any questions.

Sincerely

Kate Norris
Senior Policy Officer
Sustainability

cc.

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