

THE FRONT OFFICE

OPINION PAGE

PESTICIDE LAWS DEMAND A UNIFIED RESPONSE



Every month I receive newsletters from state turfgrass associations around the country. These publications reflect the changes taking place at the grass roots level of our industry.

Lately, larger portions of these newsletters have been devoted to pesticide regulations. The message is clear, everyone's help is needed if we are to preserve our right to use pesticides.

As superintendent John Schoellner at Essex County Country Club in West Orange, NJ, stated in the April issue, "Keeping up with new regula-

tions is almost a full-time job." Today there are regulations for storage facilities, posting, transporting chemicals, worker protection, chemigation, applicator training, and disposal. The list is virtually endless. You must comply with these rules or face serious fines. But you also need to remember that you can have a voice in future pesticide regulations if you take an active role in your state turf association.

I firmly believe that the preservation of high use athletic facilities is impossible without pesticides. I also believe that both chemical manufacturers and turf managers have acted responsibly since the passage of the Federal Insecticide, Rodenticide and Fungicide Act (FIFRA) more than 15 years ago. Certifying pesticide applicators and restricting the use of certain pesticides to trained specialists has helped protect the environment.

Unfortunately, lawmakers frequently overlook the benefits of pesticides. These carefully selected chemicals help the environment tremendously. They enable turfgrasses to prevent erosion, modify temperatures, reduce air-borne dust and pollen, generate much-needed oxygen to our atmosphere, and protect our athletes from injury. They contribute greatly to our standard of living and enhance our natural resources.

Getting this message across has been difficult at the Federal level, but it is even more difficult at the state level. Just ask Elizabeth Seme, executive director of the New York State Turfgrass Association. She has spent the vast majority of her time the past two years representing NYSTA members in the state legislature and courts and keeps them informed about changes in New York pesticide regulations. "It's unbelievable how much is involved in dealing with government and the courts," sighs Seme. She is currently working on two state court cases and one Federal case. She is also keeping close tabs on more than eight bills currently in the New York legislature.

NYSTA has joined with other industry associations in the state to form the New York State Green Council. By working together, these groups have been able to pay for legal counsel. "We are perceived as polluters of our environment and not as guardians concerned with proper choice and application of pesticides," states NYSTA President William Stark III. "We realized that NYSTA had to address legislative and regulatory matters more effectively."

Similar defenses are being mounted in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Georgia. According to Dr. James Wilkinson, director of environmental and regulatory affairs for the Professional Lawn Care Association of America, "Local jurisdiction over pesticide regulation continues to be a major concern. With over 88,000 local governments in the U.S., granting such powers to local governments has the potential to create chaos."

As you can see, complying with and seeking fairness in state pesticide regulations requires a unified response, especially at the state and local level.

Brian F. Shank

EVENTS

CALENDAR

JUNE

8

Rutgers Turfgrass Research Field Day, Soils & Crops Research Center, Halls Mills Rd., Adelphia, NJ. Contact: Dr. Henry Indyk, Soils & Crops Dept., P.O. Box 201, Cook College, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, (201) 932-9453.

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Sports Turf Association Annual Field Day, River Oaks Recreation Centre, Oakville, Ontario, Canada. Contact: Sports Turf Association, 185 Edinburgh Road South, Guelph, Ontario, Canada N1G 2H8, (519) 824-4120, extension 3460.

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Midwest Sports Turf Institute, Harper College, Palatine, IL. Contact: Sports Turf Managers Association, 400 N. Mountain Ave., Suite 301, Upland, CA 91786. (714) 981-9199.

AUGUST

7-8

Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association Summer Meeting, Stone Mountain Memorial Golf Course and Conference Center, Stone Mountain, GA. Contact: George Kozelnicky, GGCS, P.O. Box 6377, Athens, GA 30604-6377, (404) 543-7720.

13-16

Park Planning and Maintenance School, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: National Recreation and Park Association, Western Regional Office, P.O. Box 6900, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, (719) 632-7031.

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Park and Recreation Safety School, Colorado Springs, CO. Contact: National Recreation and Park Association, Western Regional Office, P.O. Box 6900, Colorado Springs, CO 80934, (719) 632-7031.