

The New Year is upon us and life goes on. There will be good days and there will be bad days. That's life.

We've all heard the cliché, "It's not what happens to us, but how we handle what happens to us." So, how are you going to handle these chunks of reality that surely will happen to us in the very near future?

I mention these coming bites of reality because you need to be communicating their possible effects on your turf management programs so you can say, "I told you so." And you need to be checking out possible alternative solutions, supporting turf research and getting your owner and members to speak to regulators and politicians. Doesn't sound like much fun does it? Sometimes reality does bite. Here are three items that may have varying effects on your course conditioning and ultimately maybe your job retention.

Reality Bites

NO MORE NEMACUR

One thing we know for sure: Nematicur will be gone as of May 31, 2007. As far as I know, the only other available product that offers fairly effective control is Curfew, and its slit-injection method can be problematic depending on your root system. Green applications continue to be tested and modified to reduce and/or eliminate possible damage from the process. The product isn't cheap, but cost becomes relative when you need a solution to your "tode" problem.

There are some anecdotal reports of various organic/biological products offering some control of nematodes. Research by Dr. Billy Crow at UF has uncovered a mustard-seed product, but it isn't in commercial production. Are you prepared to modify cultural practices to ease the problem if you can't afford the chemical solution? Are you preparing your members for the possibility of raising heights of cut and using more water and fertilizers to outgrow the damage? Might be a good time to talk about the future before it becomes reality.

METHYL BROMIDE WARS

Second is the geopolitical football, methyl bromide. They say it's an ozone depleter and even if planet earth releases more MeBr into the atmosphere than man's use, the USA and other developed nations must cut back on their use of the product. Meanwhile, Third World, or developing, countries may use more; so it's bad for the environment but OK to use if you're having trouble competing with the U.S. and others.

So my take is that this is a political game about redistribution of wealth and not really about scientific fact, but the *reality* is that we in turf are like-

ly to be hoping for allocations from current stockpiles of material manufactured before the phase-out. It may last my lifetime, but will it be available for you 20- or 30-something supers? Who knows? The point is, we have no viable alternative product that is as safe as MeBr. Construction and renovation of golf courses may require much more time, effort and money for growing in. Better start letting owners, developers and members know about this potential setback.

ARSENIC AND OLD MSMA

And last is the latest hot potato, concern over arsenic levels and the use of the herbicide, MSMA. You can put a soil or water sample in boiling acid and reduce it to calculate the total arsenic in the sample. The trouble is, you can't tell what the source of the arsenic is. Arsenic is a naturally occurring element like carbon, calcium, magnesium, iron, silicon, lead, gold, silver, etc. Besides being found in a monosodium methanearsonate molecule, arsenic can be found in rock formations, mineral deposits, sea shells, mulch, treated lumber, soil (native and exotic hauled in for construction), reclaimed water and fertilizer.

I mention fertilizer last because if there's one thing we apply more than MSMA, it is fertilizer. Food for thought as EPA and Florida regulators take a hard look at the possible link between the herbicide and the high levels of arsenic associated with golf course samples. MSMA is the only currently available herbicide that offers some control of tropical signalgrass and it's the primary crabgrass control for many.

Are you ready for possible limits on the use of MSMA? EPA is currently doing a re-registration study on MSMA and, given the emotional baggage that the word "arsenic" generates, the pressure is on regulators to come up some plan of action and it likely translates to label changes at the least and banishment at the worst. If you depend on MSMA to control some of the more persistent grassy weeds, you need to be preparing your chain of command that this tool may soon be removed from the toolbox.

The reality is that we will continue to lose products — especially old generic chemistry — as new specific products are developed. And in many cases that loss is not a bad thing environmentally. But the reality is that your programs will change and costs will go up. The threshold levels of infestations may have to change and providing flawless, pristine conditions may be a thing of the past.

As the steward of nature's resources *and* the club's financial resources, it falls on you to provide the best playing conditions possible. Meanwhile keep your chain of command informed and diplomatically give them a bite of reality so they aren't in denial when these products go away and some pest effects are more noticeable. ■

GREEN SIDE UP



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