Weed stance toughened after Argentine problem

The Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has toughened its stand on noxious weeds found in imported seeds. The agency announced on Feb. 7 that:

"Any weed or imported weed seed listed in the Federal Noxious Weed Act Regulations is subject to the FNWA even if occurs in a shipment of agricultural or vegetable seed."

Prompting this decision was discovery of Serrated Tussock (Nassella trichotoma) in lots of grass seed mixtures containing tall fescue imported from Argentina.

Previously, only those nine noxious weeds listed in Title III of the Federal Seed Act were cause for concern in imported seeds.

The Federal Noxious Weed Act Regulations list many more seeds.

III. ruling puts some at risk

More vigorous state criminal prosecution of safety and health violations in the workplace is in prospect. An Illinois Supreme Court decision on Feb. 2 exposes corporate officials to increased risk of imprisonment and/or monetary fines for such violations.

The federal government, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 1030 15th St., N.W. Washington, D. C., 20005, has copies of the ruling report prepared by ASTA legal counsel.

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"I’ve reduced clippings 30 to 50% when I mow fairways. My guys don’t have to empty the baskets as much, so we save time and money on labor. But I think the best advantage is the reduction in the amount of water you have using Cutless. It’s a marked difference."

"Initially, you get some discoloration with Cutless that a golfer would never notice it. But after 4 weeks, the difference was between night and day on how dark green the Cutless turf was."

Don’t just take our word for Cutless. Take it from Scott Niven:

"Cutless helped us convert from 80% Poa annua to over 95% Bentgrass within five years. But I’m just as impressed with how Cutless creates a much thicker turf. It makes the grass as tough as nails, helps the ball sit up higher for our golfers."

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Phillip Carnes, president of International Seeds and immediate past president of the American Seed Trade Association, said, "I do not feel there will be a ban at this time.

"The governor (Neil Goldschmidt) has said he will veto a ban. He wants action taken but he does not want to see the seed industry survive."

Carnes said the seed industry has offered these compromises:

• Reducing the ban on burnable acres statewide from 250,000 to 165,000.
• A five-year phaseout of burning, but allowing growers to continue to burn stacks if they can't sell the straw.
• Increasing fees that growers pay per acre that they burn, with the money generated from stack-burning because it's a much hotter fire, he said.
• The five-year phaseout bill decayed we have workable alternatives in place, certified by the Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Environmental Council.

Powell said an immediate ban would surely not pass.

"If it did, it would shut down the industry as we know it because no known way exists to even give the straw away," he said.

He said the prospects of negotiating a limited burning are good.

"There are two major questions," he said. "One, how many acres will be allowed to be open burned? Two — for food this really worries the farmers — will there be a definite cutoff date in the future?"

Open-field burning has been an issue in Oregon for nearly 20 years. The state legislature in 1971 banned open-field burning effective in 1975, but the 1975 legislature set a four-year phaseout. Then the 1979 legislature stopped the phaseout at 250,000 acres statewide.

Since then the seed growers have petitioned out the 250,000 acres among their total 345,000 acres.

The legislative battle is "going to be difficult," said the Oregon Fire Fescue Commission's Nelson.

"We just have to work through the process.... Our opponents want to bring the issue up on the 1990 legislative ballot.

But the seed growers just released a poll that indicates that 65 percent of the Oregonians polled oppose a ban on field burning.

Another 31 percent supports the ban and 4 percent are undecided, the poll found.

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Agronomy Unit have all said that without burning it would be difficult to maintain the seed industry as it exists today.

John Powell of Powell & Associates in Salem, who lobbies the Oregon Seed Trade Association, said, "It's an extremely emotional issue."

Some 500 people — "a majority of them from the farming community" — attended a public hearing on one bill on April 11, he said.

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• Reducing the ban on burnable acres statewide from 250,000 to 165,000.
• A five-year phaseout of burning, but allowing growers to continue to burn stacks if they can't sell the straw. "We've proved less than 10 percent of the smoke is generated from stack-burning because it's a much hotter fire," he said.
• Increasing fees that growers pay per acre that they burn, with the money generated from stack-burning because it's a much hotter fire, he said.
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