EPA looking to streamline label review process

By Peter Blais

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Environmental Protection Agency plans to accelerate or eliminate its review of many changes to pesticide labeling and formulas, according to EPA spokesman John Kasper.

Six months into the program, we'll know if procedures could affect as many as 750 of the 5,000 pesticide registration amendments made each year, Kasper said. Most of the amendments concern labeling (such as changing to an alternative brand name) or altering product composition (such as the addition of dyes and fragrances).

"If EPA can establish procedures and guidelines that everyone understands so that products aren't submitted that don't qualify for the quicker procedures, then it could really speed up the process. That would be great," Ciba Product Manager Jose Milan said.

The proposed policy cuts EPA's review process in half, from 90 days to 45 days, for certain minor pesticide registration amendments.

At the same time, the notice expands the range of pesticide registration amendments that can be accomplished by simply notifying the agency without approval.

It also increases those amendments about which the agency need not be notified.

Companies using the notification process need to sign a certification statement pledging the amendments are in compliance with EPA regulations, including public health protection. [This] action demonstrates that our process for handling changes in pesticides registration can truly be cleaner for our environment, cheaper for the taxpayer and industry, and smarter for America's future," EPA Deputy Director Fred Hansen said.

Continued on page 40

Study should lead to Bermudagrass certification in Fla.

By Peter Blais

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — Developing a certification program for vegetative Bermudagrass to ensure that Florida golf courses receive only top-quality turf from suppliers is the eventual goal of a two-year, $86,000 study funded by two of the state's major golf industry associations.

The study, which begins this summer at University of Florida laboratories in Gainesville and Fort Lauderdale, will attempt to distinguish the desired strains of Tifway and Tifdwarf (the two most common grasses found in Florida courses) in terms of chromosome count, morphological (physical) attributes and DNA analysis.

The Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association and Florida Turfgrass Association (FTA) are splitting the cost of the project. The two associations will share the findings with the 10 or so major Bermudagrass suppliers, who will hopefully use the information to eradicate off-type strains from their fields.

The undesirable grasses often have different densities, color and wear tolerance than the desired strains of Tifway and Tifdwarf. When mixed with pure strains, the unwanted characteristics of off-type grasses can result in inconsistent ball roll, higher maintenance costs and disappointed golfers.

"That can have major ramifications for the superintendents, employees and golfers," said Kevin Downing, research chairman for the Florida GCSA and head superintendent at Willoughby Golf Club in Stuart. David Burdine of Greg Norman Turf Co. represents the FTA.

"Six months into the program, we'll call the major growers together and give them an idea of what direction the research seems to be taking. We want to make sure they have time to react to the program rather than just dumping the results in their laps two years from now. It's frustrating for them to grow a crop and not get what they or the superintendents expected. The extra scrutiny will probably drive up Bermudagrass prices somewhat. But it is in their [suppliers'] and our [superintendents'] best interests to fully use the information to eradicate off-types from their fields to improve the playing conditions for the course," Downing said.

Continued on page 46

Burlington, Pickseed West penalized for alleged mislabeling

FOREST GROVE, Ore. — Civil penalties amounting to $110,000 have been imposed against two Oregon grass seed dealers following allegations of product mislabeling, according to reports in the Portland-based Oregonian newspaper.

E.F. Burlingham & Sons of Forest Grove paid a $100,000 penalty, and Pickseed West Inc. of Talent paid a $10,000 penalty stemming from an investigation by the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

Both firms have signed court documents stating they will not violate unlawful trade practices laws in the future. Neither company admitted wrongdoing.

As part of the settlement, E.F. Burlingham & Sons had its state license to sell seeds suspended for 30 days starting May 20.

State inspectors alleged the Burlington firm on several occasions from 1992 to 1994 labeled its own varieties of tall fescue seeds as Kentucky 31, a nonproprietary seed which has greater popularity in some markets.

Continued on page 40

July 1995 39
Another First
FROM FLOWTRONEX PSI
COMPLETE STATION UL LISTED

Once again, FLOWTRONEX PSI offers a level of quality assurance unmatched in the industry. Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the most widely recognized independent testing service in the country, evaluated our Silent Storm pumping systems and found them to meet UL Standards for Safety. That’s why the UL Mark of Safety is on every Silent Storm pump station, covering the entire pump station, from controls to conduit and skid to discharge manifold. It’s just another example of how FLOWTRONEX PSI leads the way for the turfgrass industry.

Certified Bermuda?
Continued from page 39
to have quality grass.

No one knows how off-types infest courses. Some likely originate from contaminated sprig stock when the course was planted, according to the University of Florida researchers who will lead the study, i.e. Charlie Guy, Al Dudeck, Nigel Harrison and Philip Busey. Some off-types may be spontaneous mutations. Undoubtedly, the mutations and common Bermudagrass are redistributed on greens by golfers’ shoes, golf cart tires and mower parts.

How might the research affect how superintendents and suppliers do business? Say a superintendent on a new course helped select a grass before it was planted. He would get a report on the chromosome, morphological and DNA characteristics of the grass before it was put in the ground. Then he could hold back a portion of the cost until the turf was retested after planting to make sure that what he got is what he ordered.

“Of course, we have perfect weather here, but at 75° F and high humidity this would be the case.”

It could also affect how superintendents interact with members.

“A few years ago, I remember Stuart Leventhal [superintendent at Interlachen Country Club] commenting to me that his members were concerned that the greens had deteriorated and weren’t putting as well as they used to,” Downing stated in his study proposal. “Obviously they had muta ted to an unmanageable level and, no matter what he did, he could not maintain the level of maintenance past years. Just think how much easier his job would have been if he could utilize DNA results to prove to the membership that there was a variety of grasses on the surfaces and it was now time to think about replanting.”

Penn State University’s Dr. David Huff, a molecular biologist and former turfgrass breeder, will interpret the data from the DNA fingerprinting on a quarterly basis to help steer the program in the proper direction. The bulk of the money is ticketed for research on putting surfaces, although a portion will also go toward studying fair-way Bermudagrass, Downing said.