

Politics, turfgrass management, and the future

By Christopher Sann



Now that I have had the chance to put some time and distance between me and the column I wrote last month about the controversy surrounding 2,4-D and cancer, I can say that I am just as discouraged as I was when I finished it. No, make that more discouraged! I am discouraged, not about the safety of 2,4-D, but about the politics that surround it and several other issues like it. The immediate anger that I felt has dissipated. The anger that I felt toward a group of people who would knowingly continue to perpetuate what was a lie wrapped in scientific jargon has been superseded by the jarring reality that this is how the game is going to be played in the future. As far as I am concerned, the discredited National Cancer Institute reports on 2,4-D and cancer rank right up there next to the Alar scare as perhaps the biggest environmental fraud ever perpetrated on an American public that is frantically looking for sources it can trust to answer its questions about the environment.

Idealists in environment displaced

Unfortunately, some of the various environmental organizations that have been the American public's trusted advocates are no longer operated by the idealists that led the movements at the time of the publication of Rachel Carson's famous book, "Silent Spring". Today some of the highly-visible segments of the movement seem to be populated by two distinctive personality types: hysterics and professionals. This is not to say that the whole movement is populated by these types, but their presence signals a disturbing turn for the environmental movement. It's a turn that turfgrass managers should pay close attention to.

My position is clear: no friend of industry

Before I continue with this monologue, let me say which camp I reside in. First, I am no friend of the chemical manufacturers. I never was and never will be. To be sure, as a turfgrass manager, I have used the products of the chemical industry for the last 20 years. But I used them as the tools that were available to me. As a thinking citizen, I am still indignant about Hooker Chemical, a company my father described in the early 1950's as the "whores of the industry", and its Love Canal. I've also had long conversations with a chemical plant manager who said that the chemical industry knew that the U.S. Army's formula for the defoliant, Agent Orange, would be con-

taminated with dioxins that would pose a problem to people, and that the companies produced it anyway. I also have a personal battle with the chemical industry. My father, a chemical engineer, died from a combination of smoking and airborne exposure to a carcinogen that he was unknowingly involved in manufacturing.

In my opinion, over the years the chemical manufacturers have had their share of executives and CEO's who I would classify as being one species above pond scum. That having been said, I think these same "creatures and other lizards" have found their way into the big business of environmental watchdogs. A concerted effort by some members of this group to capture an increased part of the environmental donation and environmental research pie has seen the rise in the number of individuals for whom money is the only goal in life. Maybe the following will sound all too familiar to those of us who have been concerned for our environment since "Silent Spring" was first published.

Recently, when the executives of some major environmental groups were asked if they were concerned that their direct mail solicitation campaigns were adding to the problem of dwindling waste disposal space or that their use of bleached paper was adding to the pollution of water sheds, not one executive of this group deemed this question important enough to respond to. The small environmental organization that pushed the Alar story benefited from its media exposure to the tune of approximately 40,000 new memberships. The National Cancer Institute received a \$10 million grant to study the effects of 2,4-D on humans from the Environmental Protection Agency even though all the previous National Cancer Institute studies that purported to show a link between 2,4-D and cancer had been universally criticized as unfounded.

What are the implications for turf?

The cynics among *Turf Grass Trends* subscribers will accuse me of being naive. And, they will say, what does all this have to do with turf and the future? First, to the charge that I am naive, I plead guilty. But, being guilty of expecting better from organizations with high-minded purposes does not discredit the observation that some in the chemical industry in the past have shown up where we least expected them now. Second, the next 10 years will be the most tumultuous in the history of the turfgrass management industry. The effects of the Clinton administration's effort at significantly reducing general pesticide use and its attempt to have 75% of agricultural acreage under integrated pest management by the year 2000 will spill over into turfgrass management industry with unforeseen consequences.

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News Brief

University of Florida study

Dithiopyr granules superior to liquid

In studies at the University of Florida, granular formulations of dithiopyr provided better control of crabgrass and much better control of goosegrass than liquid formulations of the same herbicide and at application rates that were 33% to 50% less than the liquid formulations. The table below compares the percentage control for crabgrass and goosegrass of the two formulations with oxadiazon and a control for comparison.

Dithiopyr granules versus liquid for crabgrass, goosegrass control

Herbicide	Formulation	Rate	% Control Crabgrass*	% Control Goose grass**
Dithiopyr	1EC	.6	80.5	70
		.8	94.5	71
		1.1	97	84.7
		.3 + .3	100	80
		.4 + .4	95	84.5
Dithiopyr	0.25G	.3	82	37.5
		.6	100	85.5
		.8	100	96.5
		.3 + .3	95	85
		.3 + .1	91	85.5
Oxadiazon	2.0G	4.5	91	88.4
Untreated	—	—	0	0

* average crabgrass control

** average goosegrass control

TGT's view: .25 G Dithiopyr showed commercial quality control of crabgrass (>80%) at rates that were as little 50% that of Dithiopyr 1EC formulation. This increase in efficacy held for goosegrass as well. The 1EC formulation did not provide commercial quality control of goosegrass in the first year at any rate of application, but all rates did the second year. Granular formulations of Dithiopyr are the preferred method of application where cost is not the primary factor and first year control of both crabgrass and goosegrass are needed. —CS

Coming attractions

May Issue

Cinch bugs and sod webworms
by Christopher Sann

Insect-disease comparisons and contrasts
by Dr. Eric B. Nelson

Turf Grass Resources

Back issues of *Turf Grass Trends*: \$10.00 each plus \$1.50 postage (while they last).

Sturdy vinyl-covered three-ring binders to hold your subscription of *Turf Grass Trends* are \$5.00 each plus \$2.50 shipping and handling.

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Agriculture may have been our ally

The agriculture industry, who we in the turfgrass industry have always considered as allies, is going to be squeezed hard by the new regulations. There will be a lot of yelling and screaming before it is all over. Don't be surprised if the agriculture industry starts pointing fingers at turf management in an effort to deflect some of the heat. Don't be surprised if there are some not so subtle hints that food is more important than grass. Finally, don't be surprised if some in the environmental "business" try to make points with their contributors or try to improve their media exposures by taking pot shots at agriculture's weak cousins, turf and horticulture.

Buckle up!

We must be on full alert. We must be vigilant and prepared. We must be prepared to respond quickly and forcefully to these kinds of provocations and prepared to defend ourselves and our profession. Buckle your seat belts, it's going to be a bumpy ride. ■