

"SAFE PLAYING FIELDS":

What does it really mean?

Part 2


By Rich Watson

Speaking of pests, sometimes even with your custom fertility plan in place and an overseeding program enacted things can still go wrong. The School IPM Act is the law that schools in NJ abide by when it comes to dealing with pests. Integrated Pest Management is often a misunderstood term. The EPA has a great definition for IPM. It is an approach to pest management that blends all available management techniques- nonchemical and chemical- into one strategy: Monitor pest problems, use nonchemical pest control and resort to pesticides when pest damage exceeds an economic or aesthetic threshold. The NJ school IPM law is a little more restrictive than that. If pest problems persist with non-chemical options (proper mowing/irrigation, aeration, seeding with appropriate varieties and soil monitoring/testing) being implemented, the law requires that you consider a low-impact pesticide from a predetermined list of products before making a restricted pesticide application. In my mind it is a very simple process. By performing good cultural practices in conjunction with proper fertility and a good seeding program, you can do some impressive things with your turf. However, it is the sports turf manager's job to take responsible action when pest stresses start exceeding thresholds and put field safety at risk.

Gaining an understanding of pest problems through education and knowing where to set your thresholds are the keys to a good IPM program. We live with a lot of things on our fields and choose to treat only after thresholds are exceeded and field quality as related to safety is in question. We have considered the limited list of low-impact pesticides provided in the law. Reading the Rutgers report: "Managing Turf using Low Impact Pesticides" was very helpful in shaping our decision.

Last year the cost and efficacy of these products did not allow us to use them in our turf program. We are currently evaluating this decision for the upcoming year. Hopefully some day there will be an expanded list of products to choose from. When the decision is made to apply a pesticide, we give consideration to reduced risk products first if they are available. After a product is selected, we look at the field's history to decide what part of the field needs to be sprayed. A spot application may be in order or maybe just the middle of the field is compromised. Sometimes it may be necessary to spray the entire playing surface, but not the buffer areas surrounding the field.

Continued on page 17



We know you work hard.
Let us work harder.

Lean on us for some of your business demands - we know we can work harder for you. This is why we've implemented the Partners Program and Business Solutions, and the Px3 Maintenance Package.

Px3 helps you with the planning process by providing customized bids for each project. We can accurately estimate the square footage of any property.

Customers who join our Partners Program earn points on every John Deere Landscapes purchase and redeem those points at an online store, for various industry events, or for cash on account. Program members are also eligible for our Business Solutions, which can help reduce your day-to-day business expenses.

Please contact your local branch to learn more about these opportunities. We are eager to help you with as many of your business challenges as possible!



JOHN DEERE
LANDSCAPES

800-347-4272
www.JohnDeereLandscapes.com

"SAFE PLAYING FIELDS":

What does it really mean?

Continued from page 5

Part 2

The educated field manager is moving away from blanket spray applications and beginning to treat the field within the field. Every field is different with its own needs and requirements. They need to be treated accordingly. Having a field history report for each field is a great help. In fact it is part of the law for schools. Having a hard copy pest sighting log is too. This is a portion of the law where I have fallen short in the past. Having a field's history in my head or in a notebook does not fulfill the requirements of the School IPM Law.

Moving forward, I have created field log binders for all of our sports fields. It will allow me to track problems and make decisions with all of the information right in front of me. It has taken a long time to get to this point and it wasn't always easy. IPM is a twelve month process that may take some time to implement. A large part of our turf management plan for this

year is based on what took place last year. Sometime you need to look back to move forward. This process may seem like a lot of work to some, but the truth of the matter is Integrated Pest Management is here to stay. For some of us it is the law.

As I see it, the most important product or tool in providing quality turf isn't something you can buy. It rides on a mower, monitors pests, checks soil conditions and usually is the first one in and the last one done every day. Sports turf managers around the state and the country are getting educated and doing whatever it takes to provide truly SAFE PLAYING FIELDS.

Rich Watson is Sports Field Manager, Pine Hill Public Schools, Pine Hill, NJ and member of the SFMANJ Board of Directors.

Other members of the Pine Hill Public Schools Sports Field and Grounds staff include, Greg Bunting, Bill Loftus, Tom Crosby, and Carmelo Anguilla.

PLANT FOOD COMPANY, INC. **S25 SPRAY-PRO®**
Registered trademark of EarthWay Products, Inc.

Spray-Pro is the perfect tool to apply your High Quality Plant Food Liquid Fertilizers!

Ideal for Sports Turf, Schools, Parks and Residential Properties

- 6.6 gallon Spray Tank!
- Adjustable 2-5ft Spray Width!
- Includes 3 different spray nozzle tips for altered rate applications

1-800-562-1291
www.plantfoodco.com

20-0-3 25%SRN
16-0-8 50%SRN