

Delivering Safe use of Pesticides for Effective Weed, Pest and Disease Control

Richard Minton offers some useful advice on eradicating the unwanted from your golf course – within the law.

The recent EU Strategy Document into the Safe use of Pesticides highlights the possibility of pesticide use being totally withdrawn or at least severely restricted in public areas which includes golf courses. No weed, pest or disease control on golf courses or sports fields would eventually lead to deterioration of the surface and would be a seriously retrograde step when there is so much pressure to maintain standards.



The only way we can try to avoid a total withdrawal does not ensue is to abide by the rules and stick to the legislation, ensuring best practice is adopted at all times. The Code of Practice for using Plant Protection Products (available from DEFRA) gives advice on how to use pesticides safely.

Website: www.defra.gov.uk

By law everyone who uses pesticides professionally must have received adequate training in using pesticides safely and be skilled in the job they are carrying out. This applies to:

- Users, operators and technicians (including contractors)
- Managers
- Employers
- Self-employed people
- People giving instruction to others on how to use pesticides

Subjects they need to know about:

- The relevant laws
- The risks associated with pesticides
- The risks that may result from using the pesticides
- Safe working practices
- Emergency action
- Health monitoring
- Record keeping
- Using equipment for applying pesticide

Considerations and Contacts

Before considering use of pesticides you should always look at alternative methods of control, consider the risks to people, wildlife and the environment and if using pesticide the policy should be to keep its use to the lowest possible level.

Advice on chemical use should only be taken from qualified personnel - everyone who sells pesticides must have a certificate of competence or be working under the direct supervision of someone who has. BASIS (Registration) Ltd will give advice in this area.



Website: www.basis-reg.com

For a pesticide to be as effective as possible it is essential that you use the correct product at the right time and in the right way. Always use a product in line with its approved conditions of use – Read the Label.



Website: www.pesticides.gov.uk

Application must be undertaken by a suitably qualified person, certificated to apply pesticide in the proposed way. NPTC should be contacted for details.



Website: www.nptc.org.uk

The equipment chosen should be suitable for the intended method of applying the pesticide. It should be regularly calibrated and tested. NSTS offer a service to test all spraying equipment.



Website: www.nsts.org.uk

Disposal of any waste should be in a safe and legal way to keep any unwanted effect on the environment or humans as low as possible, if you cause any pollution of air, water or soil you can be prosecuted. The Waste Management (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 must be adhered to.

Website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Keeping records is critical to the whole operation, with far more documentation than expected, some needing to be kept for up to 40 years.

A summary of the records to be kept:

- Pesticide storage records
- Pesticide application records
- COSHH assessment and environmental risk assessment
- Maintenance inspection and testing of measures to control exposure
- Monitoring exposure in the workplace
- Monitoring exposure of individuals
- Health surveillance
- Disposal records

Choosing a Contractor

A solution to ensure all legislation is adhered to is to appoint a contractor; this does not absolve the manager of responsibility, as they must ensure the contractor fulfils all the criteria laid down in the Code of Practice. A new accreditation scheme "Amenity Assured" has recently been launched by BASIS, NAAC and NPTC and is fully supported by the Amenity Forum who represents the whole industry, giving the assurance to customers that the contractors who sign up to the scheme are regularly audited and fulfil all the requirements laid down in the Code of Practice for using Plant Protection Products.

Website: www.naac.co.uk

Conclusion

Pesticide application is a specialist business, governed by strict legislation: the Code of Practice for using Plant Protection Products is essential reading, giving clear and concise detail about choosing a pesticide, the storage, the application, waste disposal and record keeping, all essential in delivering effective weed, disease and pest control. The EU Directive are currently reviewing pesticide use, in the UK the necessary legislation is in place and if adhered to there should be no reason to reduce or withdraw pesticide use from public areas.

As stated, application of any pesticide to hard surfaces, grass, shrub beds or water is a specialist service, governed by strict regulations; it remains the least favourite job of almost everyone and is much maligned by the environmentalists, but remains an essential service if high standards are to be maintained.

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