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Pesticide Roundtable Follow-Up

by Dave Blomquist, Naperville C.C.

On December 1, I moderated a roundtable discussion on pesticides at The North Central Turfgrass Exposition at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles. Included were individuals involved in research, testing and government lobbying. The Education committee of the MAGCS put together the panel with the following goals in mind:

1. Openly discuss pesticide related topics so the Superintendent in attendance can gain an insight about certain controversial opinions.
2. Show the "anti-pesticide" people in attendance that professional Golf Course Superintendents are trained and educated individuals who are concerned about the environment. While not being financially motivated to apply, we practice judicious application methods and are incorporating alternative controls wherever possible.

As the Moderator, I was to remain neutral. This was at times very frustrating because many comments were made that were simply not true, or a mis-interpretation of known facts. This is a forum for me to tell my side of the story. In the spring of '92 I began researching this subject and thought I had a fairly good idea of what was happening around me, however as I contact possible panelists and began reviewing available literature, it became apparent to me that this is a much more complex issue. It also became obvious that those involved in changing our laws and allocating tax generated funds aren't interested in science or common sense.

In his testimony before the subcommittee on toxic substances, NY state Attorney General Robert Abrams said: "...EPA should address the public's confusion about pesticide registration by not allowing pesticides containing known or **probable** carcinogens to be used for aesthetic purposes like lawn care." (1) That testimony, given in 1990, is a clear example of mis-informed albeit well meaning groups influencing our lawmakers who ultimately spend our tax dollars! Mr. Abrams suggests "probable carcinogens". In other words we think this is bad but let's not examine available facts, rather remove it from the market place irrelevant of the impact it could have on our economy or our every day life.

Former US Surgeon General, C. Everett Kopp warns against acting upon hypothetical risk: "By focusing on hypothetical risk, like that from pesticides, not only do people find their anxiety levels elevated, but by focusing on a straw man, they also feel as though they are doing something to improve their health. In doing so, they often neglect all the things that they could be doing more readily, more **legitimately**, and with greater effect, such as paying attention to smoking, alcohol, exercise, balanced diet and so on." (2)

SUPPOSED RISK

This is the strongest tool for the anti-pesticide lobby. Another way of intimidating law makers is to bring up the issue of hypersensitivity. We as a society must make decisions that benefit the majority with the understanding that a certain few may suffer as a result.

(cont'd. page 18)

(Pesticide Follow-Up cont'd.)

RISK VS. BENEFIT

We routinely reap the benefits of aspirin, antacids, antibiotics, etc. ... while people die from extreme reactions from these and various other materials that surround us daily. The April 2, 1991 issue of *Family Circle* magazine had a 7 page article entitled "Poison in Your Back Yard — The Pesticide Scandal." The emotionally charged article interviewed several children along with their friends and families. These children are hypersensitive to pesticides and cannot leave their houses in the spring while lawn care companies are out in force. Some are even forced to leave the state to seek a chemical free environment. It also quoted consumer and citizen groups as though they espoused the fact. (3)

The October 14, 1991 *Wall Street Journal* had a lengthy article describing a man who became seriously ill after being exposed to Diazinon while he was also taking the prescribed drug Tagamet. The article painted a very gloomy picture, saying that prescription drugs can interact with pesticides and the synergistic result can be fatal. They go on to say that the EPA hasn't tested pesticides with pharmaceuticals. Towards the end of the article they state that 56,865 accidental exposures to insecticides and herbicides were reported in 1990.(4)

Neither of these well respected periodicals provided an alternative viewpoint. *The Family Circle* article could have focused on the fact that although a **very small percentage** of the population is hypersensitive, the majority of us reap the benefits by having healthier lawns, healthier trees, pest free homes, and a suppressed mosquito population which helps fight the spread of infectious disease.

"TORTURE NUMBERS AND THEY WILL TELL YOU ANYTHING"

The latest attack on pesticides involves the LPGA tour. 4 LPGA members (1 in 20) developed breast cancer over a two year period. When compared to National Cancer Society studies that show 1 out of every 9 women developing breast cancer in the general population,(5) LPGA members are below the reported rate. Therefore — play golf and lower your risk of breast cancer! Level headed, logical thinking individuals see how ludicrous this statement is, but this is exactly the type of voodoo "science" that is used to back anti-pesticide claims.

In preparation for the pesticide discussion at the NCTE, I attempted to meet each panelist beforehand and get an idea of what they were going to discuss. I admit I learned some interesting things:

- Manufacturers don't have to supply the inert, or inactive ingredients to the public. In some cases a material that is active in one formulation thus requiring reporting can be inactive in another and not require reporting. How does this relate to us? Ask Bob Maibush of Hinsdale Golf Club. A couple of years ago he made an application of Mocap and a neighbor complained that they got sick as a result. He handled the situation in the best manner possible; apologizing and offering any information or help. To learn a little about the product so he may avoid future problems, he contacted the makers and was told that the neighbor reacted to the inerts in the product. Consequently, they wouldn't release any information to him. This didn't bode well with Bob and it certainly made his situation more challenging.

(cont'd. page 22)

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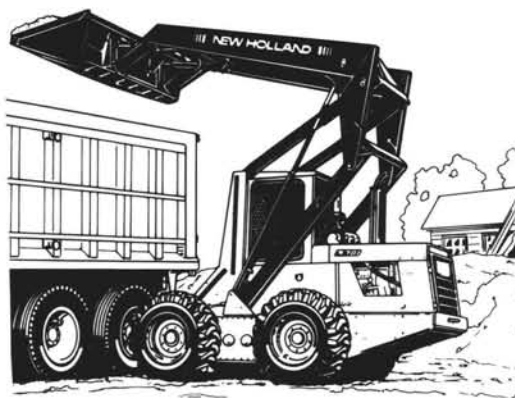
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(Pesticide Follow-Up cont'd.)

• In the late 1970's the major private laboratory that conducted toxicologic studies on developing products, deceived industry, federal regulators, and the public through negligent study procedures and make believe results.⁽⁶⁾ This is not as tragic as it sounds because other studies replaced the faulty information generated at the guilty lab, however, this brings a light of credence to reports that EPA testing procedures are questionable.

These are very enlightening situations. Knowing information such as this makes me better confront controversial situations, however, common sense must still reign. Roundtable panelist, Camilee Stauber bases some of her opinions on the book "Chemical Deception", by Marc Lappe. (Lappe is a University of Chicago Toxicologist with an "extreme" reputation). Dr. Lappe would like us to believe that the world is saturated with cancer causing agents. In his book he responds to the question — "are there really risks hidden in our daily exposure to commonplace substances? My mind raced through the chemicals that I knew would cause health problems — pharmaceuticals he or his wife might have taken; chlorinated by-products and heavy metals in their drinking water; aflatoxins in their peanut butter; diesel exhaust from their cars; polychlorinated biphenyls in the fish he had just eaten; preservatives in the delicatessen food we had just eaten; benzopyrene in last weekends barbecued steak; and manganese, alcohol, and aldehydes in our beer."⁽⁷⁾

With this in mind, consider the following questions:

1. If the US population is being exposed to pesticides through the food we eat, the air we breath, and the water we drink, why has the life expectancy gone up from age 50 in 1900 to age 76 in 1985?⁽⁸⁾

2. If pesticides are responsible for massive outbreaks of cancer and many other maladies, why aren't Golf Course Superintendents, or more specifically workers in factories that manufacture pesticides, dropping like flies?

COMMON SENSE

What was the difference between the Superintendents and anti-pesticide people in attendance at the NCTE? 2 things — we have the ability to collect data from **both** sides of an issue and reach a conclusion based on that research. We are not swayed by emotional outcries or misrepresented information. Secondly, we have an open mind! Neither Ms. Stauber or Ms. Mullarky was there to learn or gain an appreciation for the "other side". It was obvious to me that they are misinformed, "there aren't many birds on golf courses ... Lt. Prior died from Daconil poisoning".⁽⁹⁾

I feel that America is being poisoned more by journalists and politicians than man made synthetic pesticides. I also know that pesticides are **not** completely safe, however when applied according to label recommendations and proper safety precautions are taken, the benefit is well worth the risks. The future of pesticides in golf course maintenance programs will be influenced by the "doomsdayers". Hopefully cooler heads will prevail and the anti-pesticide people will focus their attention on something else.

FOOTNOTES

1. Abrams, Robert, March 28, 1990 — Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Toxic Substances Environmental Oversight Research and Development of the Senate Committee on Environmental and Public Works.

2. Koop, C. Everett — Responsible Industry For a Sound Environment (RISE) handout.

3. Sagan, Kathryn, April 2, 1991 — "Poison in Your Backyard", Family Circle.

4. Allen, Frank Edward, October 14, 1991 — "Lonely Crusade", The Wall Street Journal

5. American Cancer Society — Cancer Response System 1993

6. Whelan, Elizabeth, "Toxic Terror", Jameson Books 1985 p. 132

7. Lappe, Marc, "Chemical Deception", Sierra Club Books 1991 p. 7

8. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion US Dept. of Health and Human Services, "Disease Prevention/Health Promotion — The Facts," 1988 Bull Publishing.

9. Mullarky, Barbara, December 1, 1992 — Statement at NCTE Pesticide Roundtable Discussion.

Recommended reading:

"Chemical Deception", Marc Lappe, Sierra Club Books, 1991 (331 pages)

"Toxic Terror", Elizabeth Whelan, Jameson Books, 1985 (348 pages)

"Trashing the Planet", Dixy Lee Ray, Regnery Gateway, 1990 (206 pages)

"Environmental Politics and Policy", Walter A. Rosenbaum, Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1985 (328 pages)

Keep your fears to yourself,
but share your courage with others.

— Robert Louis Stevenson

(On the Waterfront cont'd.)

Several combination air vent/vacuum relief valves are available for control of air in systems. Air and vacuum release valves are designed to exhaust large volumes of air from pipelines during the filling process and to close positively when water reaches them. These valves operate either by a buoyant float closing the valve as the water rises or by the impact of the water against a plate or other valve closure element. The valve remains closed until the pressure drops below atmospheric pressure, as would result from draining the line. These types of valves close rapidly and will cause a significant change in velocity at closure, thus care should be used in their sizing and placement.

Combination valves are manufactured to perform the functions of both continuous-acting and vent/vacuum air release valves. Upon filling, a large orifice is opened. Once water reaches the valve, the large orifice closes and allows air to escape only through the smaller orifice that is actuated by a float mechanism.

Next month: Installation Considerations