



Perilous Pesticide Or Tonic For Turf?



It's All About Point Of View

In recent decades, changes in society have made the public more aware of the use of pesticides. Many years ago, lawn-care companies became very popular. People have been watching lawn applications to their homes, their neighbors' homes and businesses everywhere for quite some time. This has heightened the awareness of the use of many pesticides. Add to this the hoopla around 2,4,5-T and all the increased confusion with 2,4-D. These two situations have influenced many people's points of view (POV), creating an antagonistic perspective towards the chemicals we use. Our problem now is having to deal with their potentially skewed POV, and sometimes the facts are not enough. Facts can be manipulated in many ways, sometimes to prove a case; other times, facts are spun to create a new perception. Take, for example, dihydrogenoxide.

To understand how a case can be made against almost anything, I refer you to the use of dihydrogenoxide. Did you know these facts about this deadly product?

Ban dihydrogenoxide because of its toxic properties!

- Causes excessive sweating and vomiting.
- A major component of acid rain.
- Can cause severe burns in the gaseous state.
- Accidental inhalation can kill you.
- Primary contributor to erosion.
- Decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes.
- Has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients.
- May dissolve metal ions, especially in the presence of road salt.

Would you or anyone else at your facility allow the use of such a product? I think not. If you would like to find out more about this deadly killer, feel free to visit this Web site: www.dhmo.org.

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How many times has one of us spoken to a group or discussed with members certain facts, only to be told our facts are flawed or that is just our spin since we are in the golf business. What can we do? Maybe we need to look at this situation in a different way, and approach it differently.

With a little research, we can find many chemicals that have uses in our industry and are also used in the home. Many of us use carbaryl for cutworm control, but did you know that flea collars for the family dog and cat can and do contain carbaryl? We use Lindane on our ornamentals to control many pests. If you had or have children in school, you have undoubtedly received the note that came home telling you to check your child for head lice. The treatment for that might be Kwell Shampoo, which also

contains Lindane. For those older professionals who remember C-15 decline, this was controlled with streptomycin. To apply this to the turf we had to wear all the personal protective equipment, yet when your son or daughter gets a cut you apply triple antibiotic ointment—which contains streptomycin—directly to the cut.

The above examples highlight medicines that are also pesticides. When are substances medicines and when are they pesticides? Webster's Dictionary defines a **medicine** as any preparation or substance used in the treatment of a disease. Webster's then defines a **pesticide** as a substance used to DESTROY a pest. I find these definitions interesting because of the words that are chosen for each definition. A medicine is employed to TREAT disease and pesticides are used to DESTROY. Even the definitions have very different connotations. The verb **destroy** conveys a violent activity, whereas to **treat** a disease sounds very scientific. Even Webster makes the use of pesticides sound bad. My many years in this business have taught me that when we spray Bayleton or Daconil for dollar spot control, we are treating a disease; I have never heard anyone say they were going out to spray one of these products to DESTROY dollar spot. Since this is the case, why, then, do we continue to adhere to this nomenclature?

The more I think about this situation, the more I wonder why we do not change our POV. Years ago, our great industry employed many terrific people under the title of greenkeeper, and they were a proud group. As the requirements of the job changed, so have we, modifying the title to superintendent. Why then do we allow the world to tell us we need pesticide applicator licenses and not a medical turf license? We have the power to start making the changes; we only have to launch a united effort.

As I now travel three states, I have come to the conclusion that most of the people I deal with are much like me and are trying to make as few inputs to the environment as possible. This trend exists for many

reasons: budgetary, concern for the environment, deference to a higher power (in my case, my wife). I propose to you that we as an industry have to be more proactive regarding the misconceptions about our industry. We need to start a positive campaign to change our image. Where to start? The first thing we need to do is to change our message. How many of us will address a group at our place of employment or at a local high school or tech school and be questioned about our pesticide usage? What do you think public perception would be if we announced that we have a new title, medical turf doctor (MTD)? According to Webster, we are applying medicines to treat for disease or other ailments at our facilities. We need to move our industry along and understand that from an environmental standpoint, we are the best keepers of the environment imaginable.

Next time your friendly turf medicine rep pays you a visit, ask him about the list of turf medicines up for review. Listen to him tell you that many are in jeopardy due to the re-registration requirement and manufacturers' belief that our industry will not purchase enough for them to recoup their cost of the re-registration. Some turf medicines can and will be lost. Think back a few years to the use of Sentinel for dollar spot control. Many of you used it and claimed 28-plus days of control. This was a very heavily used product and proven to be very safe when used as directed. Now it is gone, and do you remember why? Easy answer: under the new Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), too much of Sentinel's active ingredient was already in the market. This was not due to our usage of the product, rather due to its application on bananas. While the United States does not commercially grow many bananas, Sentinel was also sold in Central America and all the active product was counted in the FQPA when these bananas entered the U.S. Novartis had to make a decision about the amount of active ingredient in the U.S. and decided that the banana market provided them more return on their investment than turf. In short, we could not use enough of the product

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to make it an economically viable option for Novartis to sell it to us. Ladies and gentlemen, that is Economics 101; many other products out there are in the same situation. If we cannot keep the better actives viable in our industry, how much can we actually be using overall?

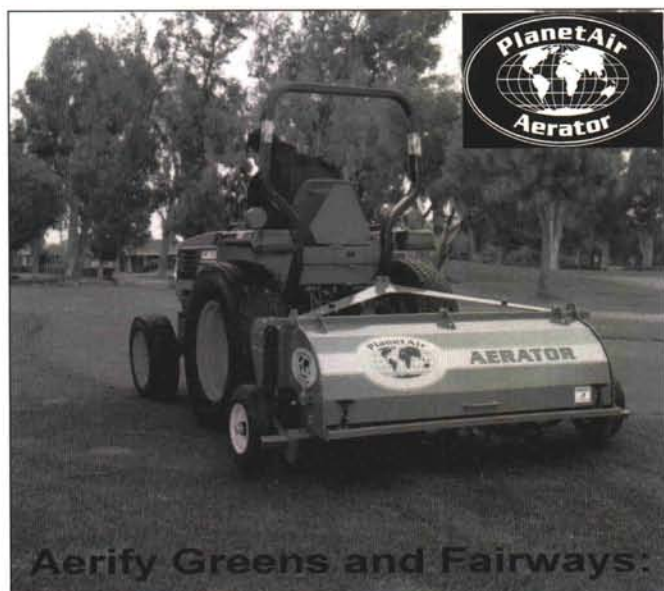
This all being said, I return to my proposal. Why are superintendents not medical turf doctors? Wouldn't MTD look good after your name in the club directory or on a business card? We need to change our own POV and stand up for what we do, but we also need to work upon the public's POV. They do not understand what we do or how we do our jobs. It is up to us to determine our future in this battle. Let's not let our detractors define what we do! The connotations about the use of medicines are very positive and pesticides are all skull and crossbones. We are the only ones that can change that POV.

As a *bona fide* champion of turf care, I proclaim upon those of you who have read this far that you are truly worthy of the title medical turf doctor and I bestow this great honor upon you. Now go and spread the word, and remember—we use **turf medicines** and only **prescribe** them when needed, in order to **treat** the patient (our turf) and protect the environment.

Last, for those of you concerned over the threat from dihydrogenoxide, consider that this dangerous substance is in fact WATER. Try running your facility without that next summer!!



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