

FLORIDA SEED LAW

By PAUL D. CRISP

Seed quality is of major importance to anyone who undergoes expense and labor of seed bed preparation, fertilization and planting in anticipation of certain results. The turf manager is likewise, concerned about the results he will obtain when establishing new turf or overseeding existing cover. The best preparation and cultural practices are to no avail when the seed which are purchased and planted do not produce strong and healthy plants.

Much can be learned about the potential of seed by reading and understanding the seed label or tag. Chapter 579, Florida Statutes, The Florida Seed Law, defines the term labeling to include all labels and other written, printed, or graphic representations, in any form whatsoever, accompanying and pertaining to any seed, whether in bulk or in containers, and includes invoices and other bills of shipment when sold in bulk.

The label or tag attached to the container or shipping document must show certain information in a format prescribed by Rule. "Tips on Interpreting a Ryegrass Seed Tag" by Dr. William Meyer, Turf Seed, Inc., *The South Florida Green*, Vol. 5, No. 4, October 1978, does an

excellent job of explaining what information is shown on a seed tag. The basic information required for agricultural seed, grass seed are classed as agricultural, includes:

1. Kind and variety
2. Lot number
3. Net weight
4. Origin, if known
5. Percentage by weight of all weed seed
6. Name and number per pound of each kind of restricted noxious weed seed.
7. Percentage by weight of other crop seed
8. Percentage by weight of inert matter
9. For each named agricultural seed:
 - a. percentage of germination, exclusive of hard seed
 - b. percentage of hard seed when present
 - c. the calendar month and year the test was completed to determine such percentages
10. Name and address of the person who labeled the seed or who sells the seed within the state

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The field personnel of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bureau of Feed, Seed, Fertilizer and Pesticide Inspection are available on request to sample seed and review labeling for you. Our inspectors live in the area where they work and make frequent calls on golf courses to check products such as fertilizer, pesticide and seed which are purchased for used. If you have not met him, be on the look out for him in the next few weeks as he will be calling on you again. In the event you have an urgent request, you may call the Tallahassee office at (904) 488-6686, Monday thru Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Official samples of seed purchased for planting purposes may be collected and submitted by our inspectors to the State Seed Laboratory, located in Tallahassee. Purity and Germination tests are conducted and results are reported on official State Chemists Laboratory Reports. This generally takes three to four weeks, but may take somewhat longer if retests are necessary or the percentage of hard or firm seed is guaranteed on the label.

Purchasers who have experienced problems with seed quality should make available to the inspector records relating to the purchase and planting of the seed. An investigation report by an inspector should show the kind and variety of seed purchased, lot number, distributor's name and address, date of purchase, date of planting, method of planting, weather conditions at time of planting and similar pertinent information. Generally, purity and germination tests will reveal most problems related to seed quality.

The Golf Course Superintendent certainly must be assured that he is planting the proper kind and variety of weed free seed which has a minimum germination which meets or exceeds the standard of 60% for agricultural seed, and that the germination test date is within seven (7) months of the date of purchase and delivery. The rate of seeding may be adjusted according to the germination percentage, therefore, the higher the germination, the lower the seeding rate may be on a per acre or area basis.

Undesirable plants, weeds, may be introduced during overseeding which will result in unfavorable conditions of fairways and greens for years to come. Bunch grasses or some tall growing type grasses are undesirable. Annual Bluegrass (*Poa annua*) is such a grass. It is classed as a restricted noxious weed with a limit of 5,000 seed per pound. It has been proposed that this number be reduced to 1,000 per pound. This will be done through the administrative hearing process at sometime in the future.

Treatment of seed against soil borne disease is a help to agriculturals in obtaining better stands. Grass seed may be treated with any one of several products. Caution must be exercised here to make sure that birds in the area of seeding do not have the opportunity to pick up treated seed.

Seed treated with mercurial or similarly toxic substance, if any amount remains with the seed, shall be labeled to show a statement such as "Poison", "Poison Treated", "Treated with Poison." The word "Poison" must be printed in Red letters on contrasting background. *continued on page 27*



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For example, consider a hypothetical seed mixture containing 65% Kentucky bluegrass, 22% fine fescue and 10% bentgrass. Calculating actual seed count, a pound of this mixture would contain 1,423,976 bluegrass seeds, 952,560 bentgrass seeds and 116,707 fine fescue seeds. In other words, although bentgrass appears insignificant on the label, it actually makes up well over one-third of the mixture!

Keeping all of these things in mind the next time you purchase grass seed should help make the purchase a wise one.

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Seed Law (continued)

Another point which I would like to make concerns the "Disclaimer clause" or "nonwarrant clause" frequently printed on seed labeling. The Florida Seed Law states that the use of such a clause does not relieve or exempt any person from any provisions of the Law.

Department inspectors are available to assist you by sampling seed, fertilizer and pesticides when you wish. Call on us to come by to make an inspection, collect samples or interpret labels.

Editors Note: Paul Crisp is assistant chief, Feed, Seed, Fertilizer and Pesticide Bureau, Division of Inspection, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.



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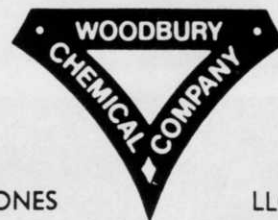
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