

Clippings

Insecticides, pesticides part of nature

We read with interest the Feb. 27 article in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* about the young boy who allegedly is having problems with pesticides. More than 99 percent of the insecticides and pesticides humans come in contact with are produced naturally by the fruits and vegetables we eat. Fewer than 1 percent of the insecticides and pesticides are man-made. Of those naturally occurring substances, half, if ingested in excessive quantities, will cause cancer or other detrimental effects. The reason they are safe is that we do not consume excessive quantities of these goods.

The use of pesticides and insecticides is very rigidly monitored and controlled by various governmental agencies including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Most individuals with asthma are allergic to a variety of naturally occurring aeroallergens. Currently, in Florida, we are in the midst of the worst allergen season of the year. Eleven oak species and many other trees bloom at this time of year and disseminate tons of pollen into the air. Many individuals

with allergic rhinitis and asthma are allergic to these pollens and develop asthma and hay fever from inhaling them. Fifty percent of Americans have a cat or dog in their home. Dust mites and cockroaches also exist in Florida homes. These animals are responsible for many indoor allergens and thus cause allergic respiratory problems.

The words "pesticide" and "insecticide" engender fear and inappropriate emotional reactions by many lay individuals. When these substances are used properly, they won't cause health problems, even in allergic individuals.

It is important for society to continue to rely on objective scientific studies which indicate that pesticides and insecticides, used correctly, are not only essential to our quality of life, but are safe to humans.

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Story originally
published by the
Sarasota Herald-
Tribune

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On Green Speeds and Golfers

Recently, I had occasion to dine with a famous golf course architect. I respect this man's work very much, and value his opinion. And as with so many conversations in life, I seem to think of the perfect thing to say *after* we've parted ways.

This is one change to get my "brilliance" to the light of day.

Among the topics that we discussed that night were issues related to green speed. How fast is too fast? What is acceptable to the amateur golfer?

Anyone who has ever played golf with me knows that I'm the definition of the "average"

golfer. For this reason, not mentioning the fact that I am never without opinion, I feel that I am more than qualified to speak to this "speed-thing," and further muddy the water for us all.

Pontification. Stimpmeter readings (aka green speeds) are a lot like driving a car. First, speed is relative, and dependent on the traffic and road conditions. Second, the faster you go the less margin of error you assume. And lastly, 99.44% of us are entirely ill-prepared for speeds we claim to want.

Speed is Relative. All players on a given course have to putt on the same greens. Speed

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is relative only in terms of how hard you hit the ball.

Smoothness is always more important to a surface's quality than sheer speed. Have you ever been on a dirt road where 35 mph was too fast for safety? Just as smoothness allows drivers to be more aggressive on the road, smoother, or truer, putting surfaces afford the player a more aggressive approach putting.

Margins for Error. On Sunday afternoons on the Indy Car circuit, Al Unser, Jr. doesn't have the luxury of watching the scenery. Yes, he has a very smooth surface to traverse, but he's going too dang fast to notice the guy with the rainbow wig holding the sign that says "John 3:16." His margin of error (that difference between winning, losing and crashing his body into tiny bits) is smaller than you or I will ever know.

Slower putting surfaces allow greater

margins for our inevitable errors.

The 99.44% of Us. Although we might like to think that we are proficient enough to drive a car at 213.567 mph at Indianapolis Motor Speedway, in actuality we're poorly skilled to take our cars even close to 100 mph. That's why there are laws. And even if we were skilled enough, would we want to drive that fast every weekend? Probably not.

I mean this in the best possible way, but golfers don't know squat about green speed. The same bravado that takes us to the back tees "... to see all of the course," drives us to force golf course superintendents to make greens unmanageably fast. For those of use who do not make our living on one of the tours, speed is relevant only if we missed our chance to practice before the round. Beyond that, we wouldn't have a clue as to how fast Mr. Stimp's meter said.

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by Skip Lynch,
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Does knowing this mostly arbitrary number affect our day's approach to putting? Do we change putters to accommodate speeds with every daily variance? Would we choose not to play if the green speeds didn't meet our tolerances?

Golf is, after all, an enjoyable pursuit. There is nothing enjoyable about reaching a green in regulation and proceeding to three-whack for bogey because the greens were too fast. Believe me, I know this for a fact! Neither are five and a half hour rounds of golf.

Two putts are always faster and cause less wear to the putting surface than three- or four-putts. Yet the faster the green's speed, the less frequent two-putts become to the amateur golfer. . . slower rounds of golf.

Oh, occasionally it is good to have one's

skill tested. But this is what club championships and other tournaments are for. Frankly, I don't need that kind of testing twice weekly.

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. . . golfers are whiners. We tell more lies, find more faults and overestimate our skills worse than fishermen. And the poor sap who bears the brunt of this ignominious behavior, often at the cost of his/her career, is the golf course superintendent.

My dinner companion asked me what it would take to make greens smaller and still reduce wear in the cupable areas. There are only two ways to do this. Make the amateur golfer a better putter or slow the green speeds down. Neither, I'm afraid, is likely to happen anytime soon.

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Reducing our fears. . . Pesticides are medicines, too!

If your child's school informed you that there was an incidence of head lice in the classroom and suggested that you treat your child's hair, you would probably go to the drug store, buy a shampoo containing an insecticide and wash your child's hair. There would be no hesitation or second thoughts. You wouldn't consider whether you or your child should wear protective clothing. It's a medicine.

If you suffer from athlete's foot, a common treatment is to rub the affected area with a cream that contains mycotin or myconazol, medicine known to relieve the symptoms. Again, few people would hesitate to use the ointment because it's known as a medicine.

To protect your family dog from fleas, you might put a special collar on the dog that will ward-off fleas. While we may not think of the collar as a form of medicine, neither do we hesitate to play with the dog, nor do we have a serious concern about the effects of the collar on the dog's health.

Miticides, fungicides and insecticides used

to treat people or pets are generally thought of as useful, beneficial and helpful. We call them medicines.

Why then, when a product with the same active ingredient is used to treat mites, disease and insects on grass or trees do many people think of it as dangerous, health-threatening pesticides?

Are medicines good for us and pesticides bad for us?

That's the perception held by many people, yet according to Dr. Joseph M. Vargas, a professor of botany and plant pathology at Michigan State University for the past 25 years, the reality is that many "medicines" and "pesticides" use the identical chemical ingredients. He is concerned that the word "pesticide" attaches unfounded fears to products that are as useful and beneficial to plants as "medicines" are to people. Dr. Vargas points out, "The drugs that we call medicines are really human pesticides. It doesn't matter if a bacterium or fungus is attacking a human or a plant; if you are

going to control it, you have to use a chemical to kill the pathogen. Whether you call this chemical a medicine or a pesticide technically doesn't matter, but it does as far as the public perception is concerned."

Some of his surprising examples of ingredients that are common to medicines and pesticides include the common use of a cream to control athlete's foot that contains mycotin or myconasol, the same active ingredient that's used to control fungal diseases in turfgrass. Lindane is the medicine used to control human body lice and it's the same ingredient used to control spider mites in plants. Another of Dr. Vargas' examples is the widespread use of dog collars containing carbaryl to control fleas, yet some pet owners have a fear of exposing their pet to a yard treated with the same chemical used to treat

the lawn for insects. Pneumonia, strep throat and tuberculosis are controlled by antibiotics such as streptomycin and oxytetracycline, yet according to Dr. Vargas, while we will put these materials into our bodies through our digestive tract and veins, we would be required by law to wear a respirator and protective clothing to apply them in our yards!

While not suggesting that pesticides are always safe, Dr. Vargas believes that some in the media have unnecessarily scared the public through a lack of scientific understanding and accurate reporting.

*The Turf Resource
Center*

*Turfgrass Producers
International*

*As quoted in the
Florida Turf Digest,
May/June 1996*

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I hope this turns out to be an interactive article. I really, really want to hear other superintendents' thoughts and lines of reasoning about our fund-raising efforts, both FTGA and FGCSA, and related topics.

Specifically, I'd like to know why so many superintendents won't participate in the various programs we've established over the past few years to raise research dollars, no matter how simple we've tried to make them. If it's a simple case of apathy, I'll assume that's the answer if no one takes the time to call or write me. If someone has a strong objection or philosophical difference with the programs we've developed, I'd really

appreciate hearing from you to explain your viewpoint. Shoot, you might convince me!

I have a hard time understanding why superintendents should spend so much time and energy trying to raise money for the basic turf research that benefits the very golfers who often end up firing them. I've just accepted the fact that it needs to be done, and superintendents might as well be the ones at the forefront.

Many superintendents have always been willing to do their part, hoping their example would inspire others to do likewise.

Why then do some superintendents refuse to even sign their name to a rebate program that requires no other effort on their part? Why do some buy generic Orthene to save a few dollars when they know Valent will contribute to turf researched based on sales volume? There have to be very good reasons for non-participation, and I'd like to find out what they are.

If the budget is so tight at your club that the few extra dollars you save on generic Orthene is critical, then, please, I'd like to know that. If you and/or your club contribute to turf research in other ways and this method is redundant, then I'd like

to know that also. I'm sure there are many valid reasons for non-participation that I haven't thought of, and I sincerely want to get a handle on why these programs aren't working so that we can shift our efforts into more productive ventures.

Even if your response is that you just forgot about the programs, I'd like to hear from you. There's only one answer that will truly upset me — the superintendent who just doesn't care, who thinks he commands the salary and prestige he does solely because of his own accomplishments. Someone who doesn't believe he should give something back to the professions that sustains him, or lend a helping hand to fellow superintendents who devote so much of their time and energy on his behalf trying to make this industry and our chosen profession better for all of us.

I understand that not everyone can get involved to the same degree — some of us are blessed with supportive owners and/or management, while others are forbidden from even attending industry functions — but everyone can contribute something, even if it is only moral support to those pulling the wagon.

If you disagree with the direction the wagon is going, then either hitch up to help pull and steer, or take the time to constructively voice your opinion. Throwing rocks at the horses shows an arrogance beyond belief.

Golf may be big business, but only one in ten Americans plays it, leaving 90% of the population who could care less about our problems and, even worse, can be persuaded to view us as non-essential enemies of the environment. Compared to most other professional associations, superintendents and turfgrass associations are small potatoes, making unity and strength in numbers vital to the success of our groups' goals.

Think about these things when examining your personal role as a golf course superintendent performing within your chosen field of endeavor.

*Everyone
can
contribute
something*

Mark My Words



Mark Jarrell, CGCS Assistant Editor

*Politically
incorrect
golf*

**Green
Side Up**



Joel D. Jackson, CGCS Editor

The FGCSA is embarking on an ambitious, long overdue public relations program Better say “public education program”. Having relations with the public can be misconstrued. It came to me that much of golf is using politically

incorrect language that could make our message unclear. To minimize legal fees for incorrect golfspeak, please pay attention.

Single. Formerly referring to one person playing golf by himself. Singleness now is a sensitive parenting and restaurant dining alone issue. In the future please refer to a “single” as a “onesome.” It’s more inclusive as it puts the

single in with all the other “somes” in golf.

Tee off. Once referred to as the act of putting the ball in play on each hole, it has now been changed to avoid the inference of becoming agitated. See “teed off.” The accepted term is, “Intent to advance the ball.” The word intent has been included since it is apparent that not everybody advances the ball, thus becoming teed off.

The USGA has taken us out of the “trap” and into the “bunker,” but the warlike sound of bunker is already being rejected in favor of “silicon valley,” which sounds more like going to a picnic on the beach than doing battle in a bunker.

Bogey and double bogey. The traditional terms for one and two over par have come under attack by Lauren Bacall, the widow of actor Humphrey “Bogey” Bogart. Her contention is that nobody likes bogies and therefore attendance at Bogart film festivals is declining. The USGA is entertaining nominations for new terms. Suggestions to date have included: Rambo or Rocky I & II; a Mo and a Curly; and dip and double dip.

Mow the grass. Once a staple of golf course maintenance jargon. This term as been subverted and subjected to street slang and is often interpreted as “mo grass” which has serious drug possession implications. The term “grooming the turf” is safer and the operator can possess a whole trailer full of turf instead of

just one ounce of grass.

“Effluent, reclaimed, and re-use” all conjure images of waste byproducts and water of a second hand nature. Gray water! Yuck! I won’t even go there! Spin doctors are tapping the perfume industry lexicon and trying the internationally popular “eau de toilet” to test reactions. The jury is still out on this one.

“Weed Whacker” was replaced by “string trimmer” by the President’s Council on Violence several years ago to lower crime rate statistics. Attempts by liberals to draw parallels between Green Thumb associations and The Back Hand mobs were wisely rejected by Congress

“Pest control technician” has become “plant protectant applicator” to avoid any suggestion of pests on a golf course. The new term has a light breezy organic feel, not unlike “salad shooter.”

The old familiar “barn” has been replaced by the new “Facilities And Rolling Stock Enclosure.” While many “barns” are still antiquated and unsafe in design and function, they can now be better known as F.A.R.S.E.’s.

One of the toughest terms to update has been “superintendent!” In a necessary move to modernize the noble but menial sounding “greenkeeper” the term superintendent is steadily falling from favor. However, a case can be made that it is, oddly enough, exactly what it means. Coming from the Latin words (*super* - meaning above and beyond) and (intendant-superlative form of the French and Latin *intendens* - meaning a person who has the direction or management of some public business or the affairs of an establishment. I’ll bet we all know some superintendents that are always going above and beyond to get the job done.

While that isn’t funny, it is a lot better than being known in the future as the “agronomic advisor” to your club’s Committee on Agricultural Conditioning Affairs or CACA. Advisors involved too much in CACA lately have had to resign hastily. I’d rather be known as the guy the club hired who “intends” to keep things “super!”

Hey! Be careful out there — and whatever you do, keep the green side up!