

## 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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### 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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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