

TurfHealth Care and Becker-Underwood join forces

Turf Health Care, L.C. has been formed as a joint venture between Becker-Underwood, Inc., a manufacturer and marketer of specialty turf products, and Plant Health Care, Inc., a leading company of world-renowned scientists who specialize in biological products for horticulture and reforestation.

Turf Health Care will market biologically derived specialty products to the golf, turf and related industries. Turf Health Care is headquartered in Ames, Iowa, and will operate separately from its parent owners, Becker-Underwood and Plant Health Care.

Turf Health Care brings to the green indus-



try BioPak, WSP, and BioPak WSP (Fe) with 10 percent iron, the industry's first biostimulants available in water-soluble packets for use on established turf, landscape and sod. These products will be sold nationwide through turf and ornamental distributors.

For more information about Turf Health Care products, call 800-418-9333.

Fish fertilizer

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fish fertilizers. What makes BioGro unique, explained Bioproducts development manager Ron Anderson, is that unlike its powdery predecessors, BioGro is available in pellets.

The pellets come in two sizes: a uniform fine grade (1.5 millimeters) for fairways, collars and tees, and an even smaller greens grade with various-sized granules (0.78 to 1.3 mm). Because the pellets are actually extruded from a paste made up of the various ingredients, it is said to be

easier to handle and apply.

One of the advantages of BioGro over poultry-based fertilizers, Gould said, is that ocean fish do not contain the turf-damaging, antibiotic and hormone residues that commercially grown chickens and turkeys do.

The secret to growing healthy, beautiful turf, said Gould, is to first make sure that the soil it lives in is healthy. BioGro accomplishes this by providing slow-release nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium that microbes and worms can break down more efficiently. It's these more easily digestible by-products of microbe and worm activity that the root hairs of grass plants actually use for food.

In cases of diseased turf, Gould said BioGro works the same way that holistic medicine does: it gives the plant what it needs to heal itself rather than attacking disease-causing organisms with hard chemicals. One of the fringe benefits of organic fertilizers such as BioGro, he added, is that in the process of becoming healthier, plants build a better immunity to diseases and thus require fewer fungicides.

Not too far from Bioproducts headquarters near Seaside, Ore., BioGro is undergoing full-scale testing on a nine-hole golf course. "I'm satisfied with it that it's working," said Jerry Zorich, who, along with his wife, Barbara, operates Peninsula Golf Course in Long Beach, Wash.

Zorich noted that although BioGro doesn't at first give quite the green lustre that chemical fertilizers can and is not as fast acting, a little patience will reward him with healthier turf. "I think it's something that you build up over a period of time," he said. "Once we refine how much it's really going to take to hold it [greens, collars and tees] to a certain level, I think we're going to be real happy with it."

Zorich is applying 50 pounds of greens-grade BioGro to his greens, all of which measure about 2,300 square feet, every 21 days. Collars and tees are nourished with fine-grade BioGro. As with chemicals, he noted, there is some pick up of fertilizer pellets on the first and sometimes second day of mowing.

Zorich also has hopes for broader applications.

"I'm using a fungicide to spot kill the fungus now, but I'm hoping that once we get good, healthy grass we will be able to avoid that," he said.

At \$450 to \$650 a ton, BioGro is priced about the same as chemical fertilizers, Zorich said. Peninsula is actually an organic proving ground for a larger, 18-hole course Zorich plans to build in the future. He said once it was known he wants to be "100 percent environmentally correct using all organic materials," acceptance of his plans have met with wider approval by the local planning department and state environmental officials.

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