



By MARK LESLIE

MONTREAL — Declaring that a large gap exists between scientific evidence and the perception of danger, Dr. Harry Baikowitz said the media, governments and environmental groups are scaring the public and taking its money to correct "problems" that don't exist.

Speaking at the Canadian International Turfgrass Conference and Show here, Baikowitz addressed the myths and realities of environmental concerns, saying, "Some myths die hard." They die hard, he said, because the media manipulates them and environmentalists perpetuate them.

Listing a barrage of "myths" from the alar scare to the claims that cranberries and cellular phones cause cancer, Baikowitz added, "Blaming ozone depletion and global warming on CFCs and humans is a leap that has no basis in scientific fact."

"There is more truth," he said, "to Woody Allen's statement: 'Help stamp out pollution. Eat a pigeon.'"

Baikowitz, whose doctorate is in chemistry, cited the existence of a "fear coefficient" in which the more common the chemical that is being discussed, the higher the fear.

False claims, he said, are also being made against golf courses.

While pesticides are described as "toxic," "dangerous," "ground-water pollutants," Baikowitz said: "We've done a lot of studies on the retention of all forms of pesticides, especially fungicides,

Science today: Myth & theory vs. fact

in water and soil, and our data certainly does not support that there are any kinds of residuals that would contaminate underground waterways of golf courses. And these [courses] have been around for at least 40 years."

The government defines "dangerous" as a substance that

causes a substantial increase in mortality, he said. "If a pesticide can add one cancer in 1 million people, it is considered a carcinogen. Yet one of three people get cancer in their lifetime."

Turfgrass diseases are treated with fungicides, he said, and they represent 1.6 percent of total pesticide use in North America.

They have the lowest toxicity to humans.

"Nature generates toxins that are at least 10,000 times more toxic than any manmade chemical, and we're exposed to them every day," Baikowitz said.

The "real data" that exists, he said, "does not support the hysteria and finger-pointing we're

exposed to day to day."

Yet, he added, superintendents must be armed with facts in order to answer concerns or false claims from golfers and others.

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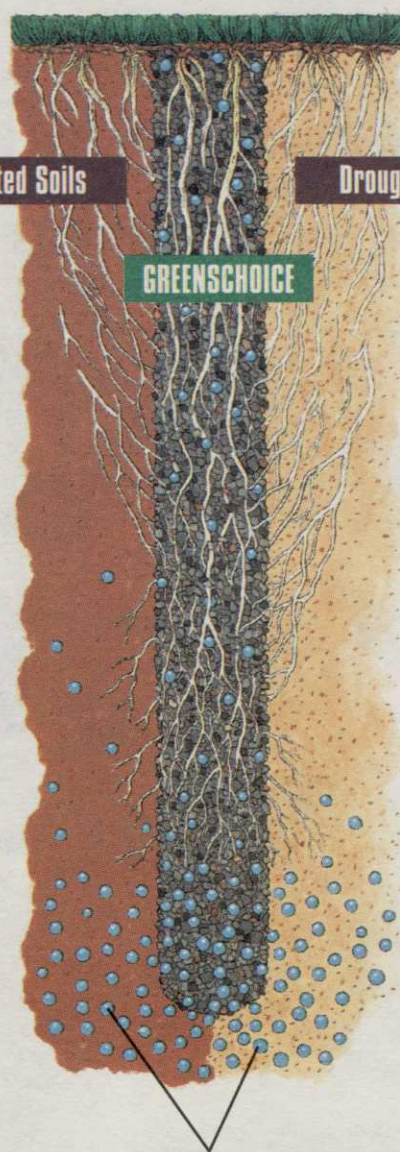
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Beard on speed

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Michigan State University found more than 50-percent control of brown patch and several other disease organisms on plots that are rolled.

- Rolling provides a decided visual improvement in surface smoothness for ball roll.

- How much higher cutting height does rolling allow? Certainly 1/32 of an inch and, in some cases, 1/16 inch, depending on leaf-growth rate, Beard said.

"Certainly rolling is back in vogue," he said, "and with minimal problems — if you don't do it more than three times a week and if you do it on properly constructed high sand-based greens. It will be with us a long time."

While rolling is one of the oldest techniques in turf, Beard said: "Yet we are just starting to learn about it... A lot of changes are happening. They have implications not just on the choice of a cultivar, or rolling practices, but the total cultural management program that is allied with that. We have a lot to learn about how they will be best used."