Nelson to lead biologicals panel

By MARK LESLIE

OAK BROOK HILLS, Ill. — With debate on pesticide use inflaming the public and driving public policy, the golf industry has to face the issue, whether it wants to or not. And the result, according to Dr. Eric Nelson, is a future of turfgrass management dominated by "a highly technical, biologically based approach."

Nelson, of Cornell University, will lead a half-day session on Biological Controls: Current Status and Future Prospects, which will highlight the 1997 Public Golf Forum, Oct. 27-28 at Oak Brook Hills Hotel and Resort here. Sponsored by *Golf Course News*, the Public Golf Forum is a national conference and show for superintendents, general managers, owners and developers of public-access courses.

The session on biological controls, from 1 to 5 p.m. Oct. 28, will climax the Maintenance track of the conference. Development and Marketing/Management tracks are also scheduled.

Nelson, who has done extensive research on biologicals, composting and other aspects of biological controls, will lead a three-speaker panel. Dr. Janet Anderson, director of the Environmental Protection Agency's Biopesticides and Pollution Prevention Division, will also speak, as will North Shore Country Club superintendent Dan Dinelli, who has been a part of several studies and field research projects pertaining to various biological controls, including the BioJect system.

Control of turfgrass pests and diseases "is clearly headed in the direction of biologicals — for a lot of reasons," Nelson said. "There has been a lot of criticism about pesticide use on golf courses. A lot of superintendents want to do something with a biological control only to say to their membership, 'Look, we're trying to do things for the environment.' In other cases, they're truly interested in looking at biologicals to augment chemical applications.

"You constantly have to be thinking about what is happening biologically in that soil. Every management practice that you implement must be done keeping the whole biology of the system in mind. It's probably a lot more labor-intensive. I've seen golf courses where they've been able to do it and they can maintain good quality. But I've never seen a course in a high-stress situation where they've been able to rely solely on biological practices."

"There are still many more questions than answers," said Dinelli from North Shore CC in Highland Park, Ill., adding that Nelson and Prof. Michael Boehm of Ohio State University are among "only a few researchers who have put in the effort to learn what can be applicable in the real world with biologicals and enhancing turf's ability to thrive and stand on its own."

The fact remains, Dinelli said, that "we have fewer and fewer products coming on the market, and anything we can do to enhance and minimize the use of those products, the longer they will continue to be effective. As a generalization, it's fairly well accepted that many of the pesticides we use are effective only so long.

"Dollar spot has become immune to many of our fungicides. Many insecticides that were mainstays are no longer as effective as they were. Pathogens tend to build up resistance to many of these products. The resistant buildup will outgrow the products that might replace them. So now you have to use higher concentrations at tighter intervals and you become addicted to these materials on a continual downward spiral of products' effectiveness."

Biological controls can counter this spiral, Dinelli feels, if they can make it into the marketplace.

That point will be addressed by Anderson, who will speak on what biological-control products are in the pipeline; what the registration process involves and what EPA requires; the issue of efficacy because, typically, with conventional pesticides, federal EPA does not require efficacy; and federal versus state registration.