

Stick to the Brands



BY JIM DAVIS

This time of year, superintendents across the country are sorting through their 2003 chemical management plans. In most cases, a combination of factors influence the selection process, including:

- What are the goals for my operation in 2003?
- What pest pressures will I contend with this year?
- Have I been satisfied with my current options?

Once the agronomic requirements are established, additional questions come into play:

- What specific products should I choose?
- What suppliers should I work with?
- How much will it cost?

Today, superintendents have more options in terms of solutions than ever before. These options run the gamut from name-brand products to off-patent generics, with many viable alternatives along the continuum. What factors play into the analysis of these options? While price is one consideration, we believe that a number of other variables factor into the value proposition and ultimately the purchase decision. For instance:

- What can I learn from my peers about the products they use?
- What are the results of the research trials on the products I'm considering?
- Who is the manufacturer of the product?
- What support do I receive from that manufacturer? Is there anything that stands out?
- Has the manufacturer returned value to me in the last year by supporting meetings or educational seminars?

When considering manufacturer support, what can we tell you about Bayer Chipco that you don't already know? You probably know by now that we recently completed merging and integrating the Bayer Professional Care and Aventis Chipco Professional Products turf and ornamental organizations.

This allows us to have more than 40 field employees in the areas of sales, research and development, and technical service. We supply the market with more than 20 chemical solutions and numerous value-added programs, like Chipco Academy, Accolades and Greenback, just to name a few.

In addition, we have a full regulatory staff in place to manage through the many EPA requirements of product stewardship. The regulatory staff are often unsung heroes, defending products long after patents expire.

Recent examples of this include reregistration work

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A Valuable Option



BY OWEN TOWNE

When superintendents sit down to crunch their annual budget numbers, they face and evaluate an array of alternatives. These days, one key consideration is choosing between a brand-name product and the equivalent material in the form of post-patent chemistry.

In most cases, post-patent materials offer the better value and are useful alternatives to higher-priced brands. Let's take a look at some of the reasons why an increasingly growing number of superintendents are making post-patent pesticides their products of choice.

For turf managers, the two leading considerations for choosing a specific product are performance and price, in that order. The material must work, and efficacy will always be the chief requirement for superintendents. But in most every case, generic products perform at least as well as the originals. That's because the quality of the active ingredients must be at least equal, but in many cases are superior, to that of existing materials. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) verifies that the technical material or active ingredient of the generic is at least equivalent to that of the original before the product can be marketed.

In many cases, post-patent products are manufactured in more up-to-date facilities than the initial products. These newer formulations often take advantage of the most recent technological improvements in manufacturing and can make better, and more efficient use of the raw materials used in the process.

Since generic materials are generally less expensive than brand-name products, they particularly make sense in today's economy. As I talk with turf managers, distributors and others in the supply chain, I keep hearing that the economics of a product are increasingly important to them. Once they appreciate they can get the same bang for fewer bucks, the decision is fairly simple. That's why we've seen a steady growth in the number of superintendents using post-patent products in recent years. It's also why we expect this number to grow annually.

One reason the generic market is growing so quickly is that so many of the major products are post-patent. Most of these are proven performers that make first-rate rotational and tank-mixture partners for the newer chemistries. With even more key active ingredients coming off patent in the next few years, a larger number of generic offerings will be added to the industry's arsenal of pesticides. Superintendents will see value in these products as long as they perform.

Remember that post-patent products aren't only of-

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ferred by companies like Griffin LLC. Essentially, every company in business today is producing and marketing these materials. In fact, more than 70 percent of today's turf market active ingredients are post-patent, and there is now no company selling exclusively proprietary or exclusively post-patent chemistries.

Another remarkable fact is that quite a few companies like Griffin LLC and TopPro Specialties, which are noted for selling post-patent products, are also leaders in supporting the industries they serve. In many cases, they contribute a greater percentage of their sales to industry support than the multinationals. The turf industry is no exception and TopPro Specialties, Griffin LLC and other similar companies are strong supporters of the GCSAA, Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) and the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association. (TOCA).

In fact, Griffin LLC was the first chemical company to contribute \$250,000 to GCSAA's "Investing in the Beauty of Golf" campaign. That made Griffin the initial crop protection products company to become a member of the "Old Tom Morris Society," the GCSAA Foundation's highest contributor level.

In companies like Griffin, research-and-development funds can be focused on improving products that can be used today, not on the discovery of agricultural products, which may or may not have a fit in the green industry. This means we can offer the industry better product support, better services, newer ideas and competitive pricing along with better quality and selection.

But it isn't just superintendents who are discovering the superior value and performance of post-patent products. In many cases, this hasn't gone unnoticed by certain major manufacturers of branded products. That's why, regrettably, some of them have taken extreme measures to thwart superintendents from having access to the newer formulations and brands. Some even subject distributors to significant financial penalties if

they offer you a choice. This forces a number of superintendents to seek out other distribution channels in order to procure the products they want.

If you're considering a post-patent material for the first time and want to compare the product's performance to the branded one, check university trials. In most every case, you'll find equal or superior perfor-

mance. The bottom line is that post-patent products offer many advantages over brands. In today's environment, anytime a superintendent can combine equal or superior performance with a more economical price, the choice is simple. ■

Towne is Business Director for Griffin LLC's Specialty Products Group.



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