

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Fertilizer industry laments natural gas crisis

A new National Petroleum Council report on natural gas supplies predicts that "traditional" North American production will only be able to meet 75 percent of U.S. demand by 2025. The report recommends that the government adopt policies that would diversify and increase domestic sources of natural gas.

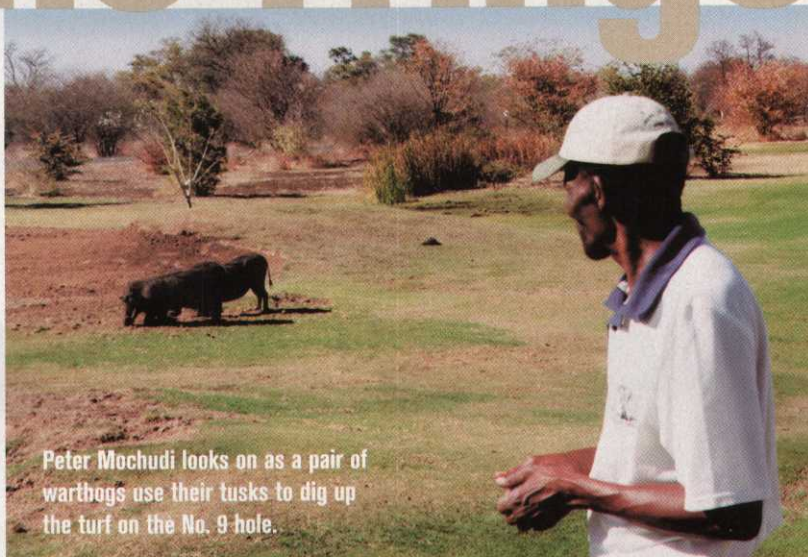
Mike Bennett, CEO of The Fertilizer Institute, warned U.S. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham that the extreme volatility of the U.S. natural gas market is having a devastating impact on the fertilizer industry. Bennett said 11 ammonia plants have closed since mid-2000 when the natural gas crisis began. These plants represented 21 percent of domestic capacity. "U.S. producers have been at the mercy of these volatile natural gas markets," Bennett said.

Evergreen Foundation exceeds goal

The Evergreen Foundation (EF), an alliance of Green Industry associations and companies providing products and services to the public, has exceeded its targeted goal of \$200,000 in seed money. Donors include: Bayer Environmental Science, John Deere, Dow AgroSciences, Griffin LLC ILESCO, Syngenta, The Davey Tree Expert Co., The Scotts Co. and The Toro Co.

RISE elects officers

Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE) recently elected officers and welcomed new board members. Officers elected by the RISE governing board are: Elin Miller, Dow AgroSciences, chairman; Dan Unteidt, McLaughlin Gormley King Co., vice chairman; William J. Burke, The Scotts Co., treasurer; and Laurie Treu, Uniroyal Chemical Co., past chairman.



Peter Mochudi looks on as a pair of warthogs use their tusks to dig up the turf on the No. 9 hole.

CURT HARLER

Out of Africa

SUPERINTENDENT FACES BEASTLY CHALLENGES IN BOTSWANA

By Curt Harler

Be happy you don't have Peter Mochudi's management challenges. Mochudi points to the collars around the bunkers at the No. 9 green. Something is digging the grass out by the roots from below the surface.

Mochudi looks on as two warthogs use their tusks to flip up chunks of the turf. "It's a pity we can't get them out," he says. "But really, they belong here."

Mochudi is the assistant at the Mowana Golf Course, part of the five-star Mowana Safari Lodge near Kasane in Botswana, Africa. There they deal with management problems that the typical American superintendent can't imagine.

Warthogs are only one animal that can do serious damage on the 18-hole Mowana course. Elephants regularly take early-morning strolls across the greens, causing much the same kind of damage one would see if a human were to track on a dew-covered green. Only elephant footprints are larger. Much larger.

The grounds staff does not worry about elephants charging. "Elephants generally are not a major problem unless their testosterone is acting up," Mochudi says. "But when an elephant is not in a good mood, anything can happen."

Even players who do not see the elephants on the course are likely to see elephant manure — the size of basketballs — on the fairways and greens. Frequently, dung piles are big enough that it is more appropriate to try chipping over them rather than putting around them. (And some superintendents think Canada goose droppings are a pain.)

Other animals show up in Mowana's roughs, on the fairways and on the greens. While the course plays at 6,658 yards, a virtual menagerie of animals plays where they please.

Continued on page 21