

# Off The Fringe

## Business briefs

### Bayer CropScience plans new active ingredients

Bayer CropScience says it will launch several new active ingredients by 2005. Bayer CropScience, which includes Bayer Environmental Science, says it sees the greatest opportunities for growth in the plant biotechnology segment.

The bioscience business will benefit in the medium term from new agricultural practices and new processes being developed in plant biotechnology.

### Toro earnings increase

The Toro Co. reported net earnings of \$27 million on net sales of \$394.5 million for its fiscal 2003 third quarter, which ended Aug. 1. Results for the quarter included an after-tax restructuring charge of \$1 million related to the closing of the company's two-cycle engine plant in Oxford, Miss.

For the nine months ending Aug. 1, Toro reported net earnings of \$76 million on net sales of \$1,186.3 million. This compared to a reported net income of \$30.3 million on net sales of \$1,123.9 million for the same period last year.

### Davey honored for environmental stewardship

Davey Resource Group (DRG), a division of The Davey Tree Expert Co., was recently honored with an "Innovation and Commitment to Change" award, presented by The Pulte Land Group.

"One of Pulte's core values is the protection of the environment," said Karen Wise, manager of natural resource consulting and environmental planning for DRG. "We helped them achieve one of their core values — being better environmental stewards."

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## PCNB Spells Controversy

BUT QUESTIONS OF FUNGICIDE'S DEMISE HAVE BEEN FUELED BY A NOT-SO-TRUE RUMOR MILL

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**P**CNB, the popular fungicide for snow mold control, has been swirling in the rumor mill. But the buzz it has created, according to Bob Eichenberg of The Andersons which markets PCNB, has hurt the product's image.

"There have been a lot of half-truths, and there has been a lot of witch hunting going on with PCNB," Eichenberg said.

However, *Golfdom* has learned that the biggest ugly rumor surrounding PCNB — that it has killed turf on several golf courses in Colorado — is not exactly true.

Tony Koski, an extension turf specialist at Colorado State University, said PCNB was applied to turf that died on about six Colorado golf courses in the past 15 years. This part of the rumor is true. But what has not come to light as part of the rumor is that PCNB has not been the sole culprit in the turf's demise, Koski noted.

Rather, in those cases where turf died, PCNB was used in combination with another fungicide; or it was used on turf that was already stressed, such as recently aerified and top-dressed greens; or it was not applied



PCNB was applied to turf that died on several Colorado golf courses. But the fungicide did not kill the turf on its own, an expert says.

during appropriate weather conditions; or it was simply misapplied.

In essence, PCNB was part of the "perfect storm" that caused the turf to die.

"There were a bunch of other factors in conjunction with PCNB," Koski said. "Because 99 times out of 100 times, you can use PCNB and not have any problems."

But what happened at some of the courses where the turf damage occurred is that the superintendents stopped applying PCNB because

they were afraid to use it. Then they told their peers about their experiences with PCNB — and the rumor mill began to spin.

Problem is, the entire story wasn't told as it made its way around industry circles, Koski said. "It came out that it was just PCNB [that caused the damage]," he said.

Close on the tail of the rumor that PCNB had killed turf was another rumor: That the USGA Green Section was advising superintendents to quit using PCNB, and that the Green Section was working with a major basic manufacturer to develop an alternative to PCNB. But Matt Nelson, an agronomist for the USGA Green Section's Northwest Region, says both rumors are false.

"I don't have it in for PCNB, and I'm sure the Green Section doesn't have it in for PCNB," said Nelson, noting that he often recommends to superintendents in his area that they use PCNB to treat snow mold.

Nelson said PCNB has been the industry standard for snow mold control in the North for many years.

"It continues to provide good results," he added. "PCNB is versatile and affordable. I suspect it will remain a cornerstone for disease-control programs in the North for as long as it's available."

PCNB's availability has also sparked talk and spawned even another rumor

ACCORDING TO EPA SPOKESWOMAN SUZANNE ACKERMAN, PCNB IS ON A LIST OF PESTICIDES THAT WILL BE REVIEWED FOR REREGISTRATION IN 2004.

— that it's on the Environmental Protection Agency's hit list. Koski said he keeps hearing the rumor that PCNB is "going to go away." He said he believes the rumor, but is unsure of a timetable for PCNB's termination.

## Quotable

**"We were thankful we had food, that we had a place to stay. Actually it was a nice, quiet time."**

— Lee Janzen, who stayed in a private home not far from Oak Hill CC with golfer Ben Crane, reflecting on the blackout after the first round of the PGA Championship in August. (*The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*)

**"I don't want to say that times are tough in the golf business, but I recently had a panhandler give me money after I told him I operated several courses in the area."**

— Del Ratcliff, president of Ratcliff Golf Services, during a seminar on player development held earlier this year.

**"It's disappointing if you lose turf. But it's disappointing if you're at Pine Valley, Pine Tree or any other course."**

— Rick Christian, superintendent of the famed Pine Valley GC in New Jersey.

According to EPA spokeswoman Suzanne Ackerman, PCNB is on a list of pesticides that will be reviewed for reregistration in 2004. "But that does not mean it will be cancelled," she said, adding that the review will focus on how PCNB is used and applied.

Bill Strange, the regional manager of Northern states for AMVAC Chemical, which also markets PCNB, says people who believe PCNB is on its way out are misinformed. Strange added that it's the responsibility of companies like AMVAC to educate superintendents and others that PCNB is not unsafe and on EPA's hit list.

Strange said AMVAC has invested millions in its PCNB business. He also said the company recently hired someone to oversee the PCNB business on the turf and ornamental side. "We're not letting [PCNB] go anywhere," Strange said.

At Colorado State University, a

researcher is studying biocontrol for snow mold, said Koski, noting that USGA has helped fund the research. Koski said a more environmentally friendly product is needed to treat snow mold on golf courses near Vail and Aspen because of those cities' close proximity to sensitive waterways, such as trout streams.

Nelson said that he and the USGA Green Section are supportive of new products to treat snow mold if those products are proven to be safer and provide better results. "But we don't have PCNB in our crosshairs," he reaffirmed.

Amid the rumors, Eichenberg says The Andersons has been trying to separate the fact from the fiction about PCNB's efficacy, resistance and safety, among other issues. The company issued a "PCNB Update" paper last year.

PCNB is also marketed by Crompton/Uniroyal Chemical, United Horticultural Supply and LESCO.