

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Petro-Canada getting into golf business

Petro-Canada, the Calgary-based fuel and lubricant giant, is getting into the turfgrass chemical market with plans to introduce a golf course fungicide later this year, said Reinhold Drygala, manager of Lawncare Products. The fungicide product is a virtually non-toxic product, while the reduced risk herbicide will significantly reduce the amount of active ingredient used, he said.

"We've been following what's been going on with the (pesticide) bans in the municipalities in Canada, and we've been able to capitalize on our two decades of experience with agricultural spray fluids to develop some innovative products for turf care," Drygala told *Golfdom* during the Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

He described the new products as being effective, safe and environmentally responsible. They are being readied for both the U.S. and Canadian markets.

"We've been talking to communities and telling them that before they consider an outright ban, here's a solution. There is no need to go from chemical to non-chemical completely," he said. "Some are listening."

Petro-Canada blends and packages more than 350 different lubricants, specialty fluids and greases that are exported to more than 60 countries on six continents. It says its products are manufactured from 99.9 percent pure base oils.

Toro, ITT Flowtronex team up

Two companies are joining forces to help golf courses more efficiently manage water resources. The Toro Co. has partnered with ITT Flowtronex to allow Toro distributors to

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What Has the 110th Congress Done?

ANALYSIS

NOT MUCH, DESPITE INDUSTRY CONCERN THAT IT WOULD

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

Blame the Mitchell Report. Blame election politics or a closely divided Congress. Blame an ongoing war or squabbles over immigration reform. Blame the improprieties of Larry Craig and Tom Foley (at least we got that much-needed Page Board Revision Act out of it, one of eight laws enacted by this Congress).

Whomever you blame, it's clear that Congress has done little to impact golf businesses. Despite concern that the Democratic-controlled Congress would implement far-reaching environmental policies when it took over 18 months ago, the legislature largely has been unable to enact many environmental initiatives that much of the industry worried about.

"Our industry was right to be concerned just based on the track records of the congressmen in important environmental positions," says Carrie Riordan, lobbyist for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. "But the fact that Congress is so closely divided certainly has contributed to a lot of the inability to come



together (to enact legislation)."

In one regard, it's kind of comforting that our do-little Congress was distracted enough to, well, do very little. We're a conservative bunch. And the legislature would rather address political wedge issues (remember Terry Schiavo?) and easy-to-digest politics rather than tackling the tough issues that might make America a better place to live.

I guess Roger Clemens is easier to find than Osama bin Laden, and baseball is easier to fix than Social Security.

But environmental policies haven't exactly been on the back burner. Many failed bills littered the floor of the House and Senate or are held up in committees. Failures of note include America's Climate Security Act of 2007, which is stalled in subcommittee (although, I bet someone is pitching a new movie called "Climate Secu-

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offer Flowtronex pump stations when golf courses are purchasing Toro irrigation products in the United States and Canada.

"In addition to having one point of contact when acquiring a Toro irrigation system and Flowtronex pump station package, customers will also be able to realize the benefits of further product integration," Toro Marketing Manager David Angier said in a press release. "As part of this agreement, we are working closely with Flowtronex to increase the level of product integration and communication between Toro control systems and Flowtronex pump station software."

Flowtronex parent company, ITT, has a portfolio of water-related products and services, including reverse osmosis, UV treatment and more. As these technologies are combined with Flowtronex pump stations, customers will realize substantial benefits, especially for courses that use effluent or salt water for irrigation, according to the companies.

"By using ITT technologies, Flowtronex pump stations and Toro irrigation products, we will be able to deliver a complete source to course water management solutions," Angier said.

Environmental Turf honored

Environmental Turf was named Turf & Ornamental Company of the Year at the 2007 BoardRoom "Excellence in Achievement" Awards announced during the Golf Industry Show in Orlando.

"We are very honored to receive this prestigious award," said Environmental Turf's President Stacie Zinn. "2007 was the year that everything came together for Environmental Turf and our premium golf turf, SeaDwarf Seashore paspalum. The grasses' success this year was also a success for the golf industry. Private clubs and golf facilities in warm-season climates using the grass were increasingly recognized as environmental stewards, providing sustainable green spaces for the good of the game and for the world."

BoardRoom magazine is the official publication of the Association of Private Clubs & Directors. ■

Consumer Confidence Sinks

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE GOLF INDUSTRY?

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

The economic news as of late has not been good. Consumer confidence is down, and wholesale inflation has soared.

The New York-based Confidence Board reported recently that its Consumer Confidence Index sank to 75.0 in February from 87.3 in January. It's the lowest level since February 2003, when it hit 64.8. Analysts had expected the latest reading to hit about 83.0.

The Consumer Confidence Index measures how consumers feel about the economy, which in this case is not very good.

Golf course superintendents and other readers of *Golfdom*, meanwhile, don't feel as strong about the economy as they once did. In the past five years, we've asked superintendents and other golf industry employees: Are you confident the economy will improve next year?

Here's how they have answered:

■ In 2003, 73 percent said they were confident the national economy would improve in 2004.

■ In 2004, 69 percent said they were confident the national economy would improve in 2005.

■ In 2005, 65 percent said they were confident the national economy would improve in 2006.



■ In 2006, 65 percent said they were confident the national economy would improve in 2007.

■ In 2007, 57 percent said they were confident the national economy will improve in 2008.

In five years, the confidence factor has plunged 16 percent, according to our results. Incidentally, we surveyed roughly 650 readers in late 2007 for our latest poll.

The guess is that our readers' economic views are right on with the general public's views.

But let's look at this situation from a glass-is-half-full approach, as has Joe Beditz, CEO of the National Golf Foundation. Beditz points out that, despite all of the bad economic news in the past six months — an expensive war, the mortgage meltdown, inflation — the golf industry is relatively flat in rounds played.

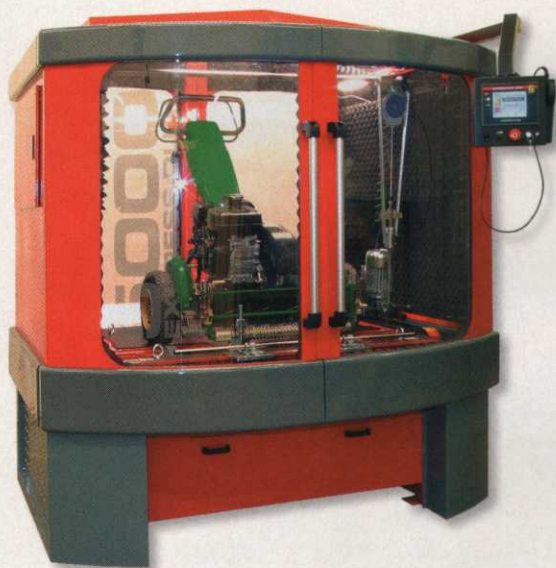
Beditz's point is the golf industry is holding its own. ■

A Search That Finds What You're Looking For

Golfdom is proud to bring superintendents another industry first. The *Golfdom Search* engine links superintendents with the industry's leading suppliers of golf course equipment, chemicals, supplies and services without the static of unwanted search results generated by larger search engines. The *Golfdom Search* highlights only industry-specific companies so superintendents can find the right vendors without wading through pages of useless search results.

Log on to www.golfdom.com/search to give it a spin. It's easy, free and no registration is required. And let us know what you think at info@golfdom.com. ■

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Off The Fringe

Navigating Product Evolution and Confusion

BASF'S BUCCI DISCUSSES WHAT THE INDUSTRY CAN
DO TO COMBAT PESTICIDE PRODUCT

Research shows that many superintendents have a difficult time correctly identifying a chemical's brand with its manufacturer. Industry acquisitions often bring about changes in active ingredient ownership, further confusing the marketplace as to which company owns which molecule. Toni Bucci, Ph.D., the business manager of the BASF Professional Turf & Ornamentals, is an expert in this area. *Golfdom* Editor in Chief Larry Aylward recently discussed the topic with Bucci.



Toni Bucci

What are some of the non-traditional ways that active ingredients make it to market? And could you explain how and why this happens?

Basic manufacturers are challenged to constantly provide innovative products to the marketplace. Considering the time investment to bring a new product to market, which is roughly 10 years, and considering changing customer needs, manufacturers really have to combine both science and marketing to find new solutions for customers.

Innovation in this industry has many forms. It is scientific discovery, but it's also making the right business decisions at the right time. Though we're committed to R&D, acquisitions of active ingredients are an important piece of that. Basic manufacturers are always keeping an eye out for unique ways to help solve those unmet customer needs.

I understand that it took BASF's Trinity fungicide nearly 20 years to find a home. Can you talk about the product's evolution?

Triticonazole, today known as Trinity fungicide, was discovered by Rhone Poulenc in 1988 but wasn't rigorously tested until 1997. Triticonazole was then taken over by Aventis through a merger with Rhone Poulenc and then Bayer Environmental Science acquired the active ingredient when Aventis was purchased. Triticonazole was actually submitted for registration as Triton on March 14, 2002, and then it changed hands again to BASF in the latter half of 2002. In that year, BASF acquired a number of assets, which included

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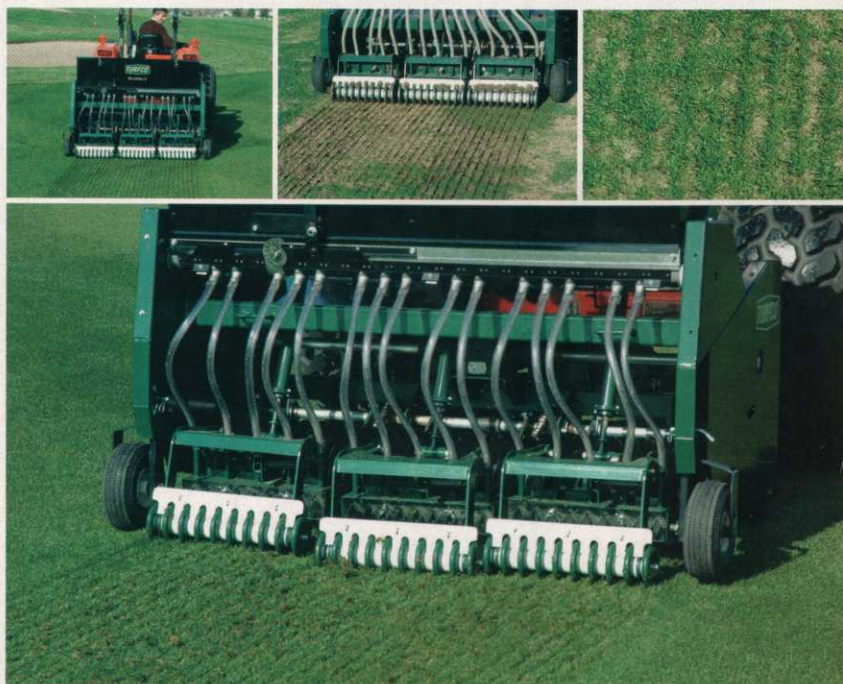
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global rights to triticonazole, but it really wasn't even until 2005 that we gained exclusivity for use in U.S. turf. So it took nearly 15 years for the product to find a permanent home and then another five before it came to market. The product received federal registration by EPA on Jan. 11, 2007.

I understand you have done some research showing that many product users aren't able to match product brands, active ingredients and manufacturers. How much of this is a problem with golf course superintendents?

We conducted some research that shows that there is some confusion out there. BASF conducted two focus groups with

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Quotable

"We talked shop right up until the end, and he always had a twinkle in his eye when we talked about golf and turf. I owe everything to my dad when it comes to teaching me the business and also the lessons of life. I will miss telling him I love him."

— Bruce Williams, certified golf course superintendent at the Los Angeles Country Club, on the March 7 death of his father and mentor, Robert, an industry icon who spent 60 years in the golf course maintenance profession, including 21 years as Bob-O-Link Golf Club's superintendent. (Chicago Tribune)

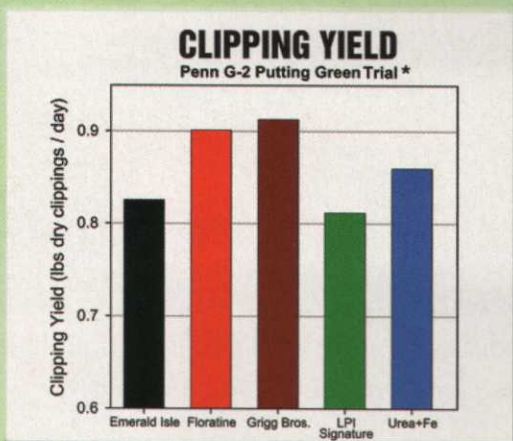
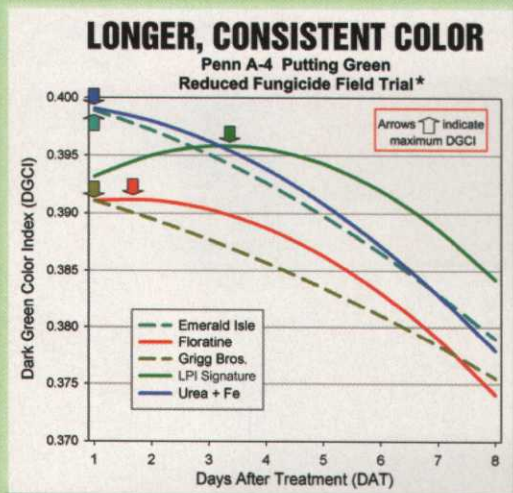
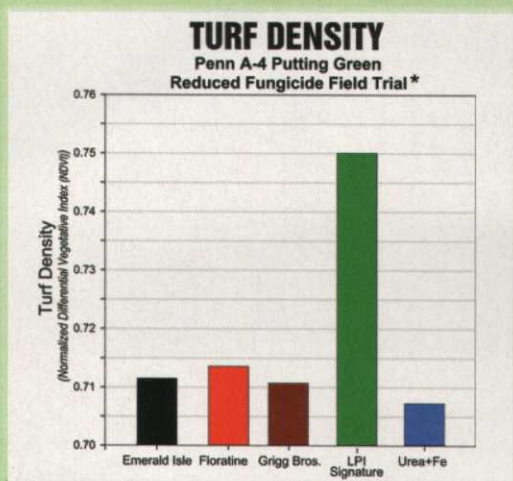
"What do you get when you put basketball and golf together? You get Charles Barkley tearing up the turf."

— Jason Fausey, market development specialist for Valent U.S.A., on the harsh consequences that turf must endure from certain golfers.

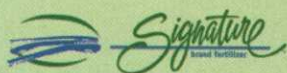
"I like the kid but he's got to get his head on straight. The partying and other shenanigans . . . if that's the way he wants to be, I don't choose to be a part of it."

— Renowned golf coach Butch Harmon on John Daly, his former student, who seems to be interested in things other than golf. (Associated Press)

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* Max Schlossberg, Ph.D (PSU), 2007.



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Off The Fringe

“Navigating Product Evolution” – Continued from page 20
golf course superintendents in conjunction with the 2006 Golf Industry Show in Atlanta. During those focus groups, a matching exercise of a number of popular product brands, active ingredients and manufacturers showed that though superintendents are well educated on active ingredients, they don’t necessarily know which products contain which ingredients, or which basic manufacturer is responsible for each branded product.

What can the chemical side of the golf industry do to change this dilemma? And how important is it for superintendents to know who’s making their products?

Most participants in our focus groups actually expressed feeling embarrassed for not knowing which active ingredient belonged to which manufacturer. One of their suggestions was to prominently display the name of the active ingredient and the name of the basic manufacturer on the product label. And yes, it is important to know the manufacturer that is making and servicing you with a product. Quality is not always equal among products. There is value in what we’re doing in terms of production quality, technical service and complaint handling. That’s important for our customers to know. ■

“Congress” – Continued from page 14

ity” to Stephen Seagal right now), and the Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act of 2007 is also stalled in committee.

If they fail to reach the floor for a vote by election time, then they will need to be reintroduced by the 111th Congress in 2009.

While those might be coups for the industry, the legislature’s failure to agree on an immigration bill might have hindered superintendents’ ability to find necessary workers, especially because Congress allowed the returning-worker provision of the H2B visa bill to expire.

But the legislation that is having the biggest impact on turfgrass managers is being debated and implemented at the local level, Riordan says. Water-use issues have plagued the Southeast and Southwest, and water rights are being debated around the Great Lakes.

Municipalities still debate the regulation of phosphorous leaching, and a New York municipality is trying to ban leaf blowers to diminish noise pollution as well as emissions.

Here’s what we know: Politics are local. Golf business is local. Your confidence in the economy and personal prosperity are local. So seriously, can you afford to stay on the sidelines while city councils, watershed councils and others in the community continue to create obstacles that prevent you from doing your job as superintendent?

After all, we don’t really need change that we can believe in. We need people who we trust to make the right decisions. And whom do you trust more than yourself? ■