

SOME BAD NEWS ON THE PESTICIDE FRONT

By Thomas R. Parent

It appears the nation's golf courses could lose another valuable and proven pesticide product — diazinon. The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed banning golf course and sod farm applications of this commonly used and effective insecticide.

The reason given by the EPA for considering this ban is concern for wildlife safety. They are not looking at a total ban and would allow continued agricultural use on crops like corn and alfalfa. This action marks a distinct departure from EPA procedures in more recent years. The proposal was announced at the **start** of the special review of the product, instead of after the study, which has been the normal way such considerations have been dealt with previously.

It also is the first time in years the agency has moved to block pesticide uses that **don't** pose clear risks to humans. The agency was moved to action by reports of about 60 cases of bird kills linked to diazinon in 18 states. One incident reportedly linked the death of about 700 Atlantic Brant geese to a diazinon application on a Nassau County, New York golf course.

Ciba-Geigy manufactures the product and is working with the EPA to help sort fact from fiction. A company spokesman said they believe the wildlife problem, if it is indeed a documented problem, can be eliminated by irrigating treated areas with a quarter inch of water immediately after application. This reporter, in casual conversation at several turf conferences, was led to believe the Long Island golf course incident involved a granular application. The EPA, in December of 1985, approved a C-G request that the diazinon label be amended to include the irrigation requirement.


The Golf Course Superintendent is in a difficult position in this situation and others similar to it. First, the EPA admits that in the vast majority of cases the available data does indicate diazinon is a safe product for golf course use. Secondly, although this insecticide is a major product for Ciba-Geigy, the golf course and sod farm use represents only 8% of the approximately 8,000,000 pounds the nation uses each year. We do not have much economic leverage. Fortunately, Ciba-Geigy, in a letter to most golf courses and sod farms, has committed "every scientific resource available to support the continued uses of diazinon on golf courses and sod farms, because we firmly believe that the product can be used without causing significant hazards to birds."

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ProTurf Division
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Telephone: 009537-5553

