

# It's Buying Time - "Brand vs. Generic"



By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

It is everywhere in our daily lives - the decision to buy a brand name product or a generic one. It is a decision we have to make at the drug store, the grocery store or the hardware store. We also face it when buying fungicides for our golf course businesses.

I personally think it is a harder decision to make than maybe some others do. Whenever I review support given to the turfgrass program here in Wisconsin, I don't see the generic brands helping at all. When I see the support given to the GCSAA, especially at the annual conference, it seems the brand name manufacturers are way out front in their support of golf course superintendents. That support comes in the form of scholarships, speaker sponsorships, and support of events we enjoy attending.

But there are other issues, too. The principal issue comes to the question as to whether generics are really the same as brand name products. Here is a summary

of what one of the manufacturers told me; it is a clear answer from that side of the issue. By the way, I have removed any product references.

Discovering a molecule worthy of becoming an active ingredient is not the result of circumstance. For every one molecule that is identified to have potential value as a fungicide, herbicide, insecticide or plant growth regulator, hundreds of thousands of molecules are screened. Companies typically discover these AI's with extensive investments in research programs. The process of testing molecules for activity, plant safety, environmental safety, and worker safety takes more than a decade. The vast majority of compounds never meet the criteria for commercial development.

Although a potential compound may have beneficial properties, it may be very difficult to synthesize or too expensive to produce commercially. Assuming a production process can be developed without losing any of



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the molecule's beneficial qualities, a formulation process must be developed to ensure the AI will perform consistently in various scenarios. The final formulation should remain stable while in storage and in tank mixes with other common products, and provide consistent performance.

Basic manufacturers receive a 20-year patent for new products. Patenting a molecule usually takes place very early in the investigative process. Nevertheless, basic manufacturers must continue investment in final product development and data supporting registration by the EPA and individual states before the product can be marketed.

From molecule discovery until the day a product is commercially available, a company will invest over \$120 million over ten to twelve years. That, of course, is well over half the life of a U.S. patent.

Manufacturers of branded products maintain the EPA registrations. The EPA recognizes that the company that develops a new product knows the most about it, and that modifications to the label will likely occur once the product is widely used.

In addition, basic manufacturers continually invest in the proper stewardship of their products, and respond to market and customer needs through improved formulations and packaging. A significant portion of sales revenue is earmarked for research and development of new molecules.

It is not unusual for a brand manufacturer to invest 10 - 15% of revenue dollars in research. At the same time, as I have noted, basic manufacturers commit significant time and resources to support the industry through partnerships with national and local associations, by providing technical support, and other services through collaboration with distributors and customers to answer questions and solve problems.

Generic products - occasionally referred to as post-patent chemistries - are alternatives to branded products, but are not identical to branded products. When patents expire, data on the original molecule becomes available for use. However, the "recipe" for synthesizing the molecule and formulating the product may be protected by the basic manufacturer as a trade secret. Generic producers typically must purchase or develop a manufacturing process. Even though a generic product may contain the same amount of active ingredient as a branded product, field research demonstrates that the generic product may not perform as predictably or consistently as the original product.

Unlike the basic manufacturer, most generic suppliers have not made the investment in extensive research and development programs, nor do they maintain investment in improving the product through re-registration, updated formulation, or by offering other added-value services and support.

The generic vs. brand story is much more complex

than what is offered here and deserves further investigation from end-users like you and me. It is important to realize, however, that when purchasing a proven brand, you receive a quality product, dedicated resources to product stewardship and new product discovery and development, the technical, legal and environmental support of the basic manufacturer, and most importantly a long-term investment in and commitment to the future of our industry. ♣



### golf industry show

The inaugural **Golf Industry Show**, which combines the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the National Golf Course Owners Association trade shows, will be conducted **Feb. 10-12, 2005**, at the **Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Fla.**, and will represent the full spectrum of golf facility management and golf business. The Golf Course Builders Association of America and the American Society of Golf Course Architects will also join the event. The Club Managers Association of America will partner beginning in 2007.

While the trade shows of the participating organizations will be combined, each will retain autonomous education conferences that will run concurrently with the Golf Industry Show. The objective is to present an industry trade show that represents significant aspects of a golf operation - from ownership, feasibility and design, construction and operations.

The show will be a progressive event that features unparalleled networking opportunities and hands-on access to resources for professional members of the golf industry.

In addition, the trade show will focus on compelling golf course and facility management solutions for all stakeholders through a unique floor design in terms of physical arrangement and content.

The 2005 floor layout will be highlighted by seven solution centers providing the latest industry technology, communication and education. Each solution center will provide unparalleled networking opportunities, educational sessions, demonstrations, access to experts in that area, and exhibits related to the particular solution center. Among other things, attendees will get to see the building of an actual golf course green, a driving range, putting green and chipping surface, an electric vehicle test track, and a full-scale pump station demonstration.

**For more information about the inaugural Golf Industry show, Feb. 10-12, 2005, in Orlando, visit [www.golfindustryshow.com](http://www.golfindustryshow.com).**

