

GOOD NEWS

Settlement Reached on Mercury Uses on Golf Courses

by Dr. Ward Stienstra

The Environmental Protection Agency has reached an out of court settlement with producers of mercury pesticides. Some will be phased out altogether by August 31, 1978 and others are restored for certain golf course uses. I believe the efforts of the Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association had an effect on this decision and I know the data generated in Minnesota was used to support the restored registration.

First, the manufacture of mercury products to treat summer golf turf diseases is limited to no more than the equivalent of two years of previous production, less than 50,000 lbs. and all production will cease on August 31, 1978. Second, the use of mercury pesticides to control winter golf turf diseases was reinstated with some additional restrictions. These restrictions are:

1. Limit use to professional golf course superintendents or persons under their direct supervision.
2. Limit application of winter golf course products to greens, tees and aprons.
3. No application of winter golf course products within 25 feet of bodies of water containing fish that might be eaten by people.

This will decrease the use of mercury pesticides and reduce the possibility of human exposure. This settlement concludes a long series of EPA actions concerning mercury which began in 1970. EPA issued a notice of intent to cancel all registrations of pesticides containing mercury on March 22, 1972. Hearings on the issue began October 1, 1974 and concluded on November 17, 1975 when the administrative law judge studied the evidence. He concluded that while not a black and white situation or that mercury pesticides pose no risks, that some turf fungicides registrations not be canceled. Mr. Train, EPA Administrator, did not reach the same conclusion and on February 17, 1975 issued a cancellation order. On March 2 a temporary stay of the cancellation order was granted so production could continue at levels not to exceed the average monthly amount produced the year preceding.

The out of court settlement which was released on August 27, 1976 does not limit mercury production for winter turf disease control. I'm told that the supply will be short this fall, but production is beginning!

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