

Off the Market

*Last mercury-based pesticide,
Calo-Clor, now is obsolete*

By Hal Phillips

Whether or not you agree that mercury-based pesticides pose tangible threats to the environment and their applicators, the last of this chemical breed disappeared from the market place.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has canceled the registration of the mercury-based pesticides Calo-Clor and Calo-Gran, as voluntarily requested by Grace-Sierra Crop Protection Co. (The request was made last year and Grace-Sierra has since been purchased by The Scott Company.)

Reactions in the golf course industry vary widely, as some applaud the move and some decry it. Either way, superintendents in Northern climes are searching for new ways to treat pink and grey snow mold.

"A lot of guys use (Calo-Clor), and I imagine a lot of guys are stockpiling right now," said Kevin Ross, superintendent at Falmouth (Maine) Country Club. "I don't use it and I'll tell you why: For any sort of disease management, I like to use the least toxic product available. This stuff (Calo-Clor) comes with a skull and crossbones on it."

"It does carry the danger label," confirmed Greg Wahl, national accounts manager for Scotts. "Mercury is a carcinogen, and you have to remember that mercury has been eliminated from most everything. Batteries may have a little mercury in them, but that's it."

Calo-Clor and its granular cousin Calo-Gran were the last mercury-based pesticides still registered for use in the United States. They contain the active ingredients mercuric chloride and mercurous chloride. Approximately 21,000 combined pounds of these two pesticides were used annually, according to EPA.

Under terms of the cancellation action, Scott could sell and distribute products labeled for release or shipment on or before June 25 of last year until June 24, 1994. Retailers and other distributors may sell these products until their stocks are exhausted and users may use them until their supplies are depleted.

Dr. Noel Jackson, the renowned University of Rhode Island agronomist, isn't convinced that mercury-based products are harmful when applied on golf courses.

"The amount used on golf courses is extremely limited," Jackson explained. "And most of the mercury is tied up in the soil profile. It doesn't move laterally. It doesn't leech. Whether you think of that as an environmental danger, that's up to you."

"I don't."

Patty Knaggs, head superintendent at Hazeltine

National Golf Club in Chaska, can't argue with the product's effectiveness.

"It's superb," she said. "But I won't stockpile it, though I had the opportunity to do so. I'm just as happy to face the real world."

Regardless of where you stand on the mercury issue, superintendents who used Calo-Clor and Calo-Gran are searching for alternatives. Wahl said Scott is "currently working on a couple of compounds to replace them."

Ross endorses a combination of Daconil and Chipco 26019, as well as a combination of Daconil and Curalan.

Knaggs said she has also found success using the Daconil-Chipco combination, though it's significantly more expensive than Calo-Clor and about "80 to 90 percent as effective."

On another front, Ross made an interesting discovery this year.

"This past winter I tested Banner, which has looked real good," said Ross. "The spots where I used it are spotless this spring, and this was one helluva year for snow mold."

"Daconil, on the other hand, has been around forever. But no one's ever used it for snow mold. It works great."

The problem with systemic fungicides like Banner — not to mention Bayleton, Rubigan and Turemec SP — is overuse. Both Ross and Jackson agreed that excessive spring dollar spot application might build a tolerance to the fungicide, precluding its use when you really need it — in the summer.

PLEASE CALL

Rochester Golf and
C.C. Pro-Shop

507-282-3170

to reserve carts for
the Garske Scramble.

COST: \$20.25 per cart
(40 total carts)