

# REDUCING OUR FEARS

## *Pesticides Are Medicines, Too*

If your child's school informed you that there was an incidence of head lice in the classroom and suggested that you treat your child's hair, you would probably go to the drug store, buy a shampoo containing insecticide and wash your child's hair. There would be no hesitation or second thoughts. You wouldn't consider whether you or your child should wear protective clothing. It's a medicine.

If you suffer from athlete's foot, a common treatment is to rub the affected area with a cream that contains micotin or miconizol, medicine known to relieve the symptoms. Again, few people would hesitate to use the ointment because it's known as a medicine.

To protect your family dog from fleas, you might put a special collar on the dog that will ward off fleas. While we may not think of the collar as a form of medicine, neither do we hesitate to play with the dog, nor do we have a serious concern about the effects of the collar on the dog's health.

Miticides, fungicides and insecticides are used to treat people or pets and are generally thought of as useful, beneficial and helpful. We call them medicines.

Why then, when a product with the same active ingredient is used to treat mites, diseases and insects on grass or trees do many people think of it as dangerous, health-threatening pesticides?

Are medicines good for us and pesticides bad for us?

That's the perception held by many people, yet according to Dr. J. M. Vargas, a professor of Botany and Plant Pathology at Michigan State University for the past 25 years, the reality is that many "medicines" and "pesticides" use the identical chemical ingredients. He is concerned that the word "pesticide" attaches unfounded fears to products that are useful and beneficial to plants as "medicines" are to people. Dr. Vargas points out, "The drugs that we call medicines are really human pesticides. It doesn't matter if the bacterium or fungus is attacking a human or a plant; if you are going to control it, you have to use a chemical to kill the pathogen. Whether you call this chemical a medicine or a

pesticide, technically it doesn't matter, but it does as far as the public perception is concerned."

Some of his surprising examples of ingredients that are common to medicines and pesticides include the common use of a cream to control athlete's foot that contains micotin or myconazol, the same active ingredient that's used to control fungal disease in turfgrass. Lindane is the medicine used to control human body lice and it's the same ingredient used to control spider mites in plants. Another of Dr. Vargas' examples is the wide-spread use of dog collars containing carbaryl to control fleas, yet some pet owners have a fear of exposing their pet to a yard treated with the same chemical used to treat the lawn for insects. Pneumonia, strep throat and tuberculosis are controlled by antibiotics such as strptomyci and oxytetracycline, yet according to Dr. Vargas, while we put these products into our bodies through our digestive tract and veins, we would be required by law to wear a respirator and protective clothing to apply them to our yards!

While not always suggesting that pesticides are always safe, Dr. Vargas believes that some in the media have unnecessarily scared the public through a lack of understanding and accurate reporting.

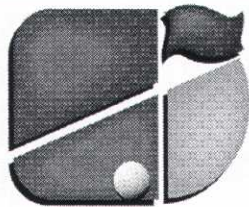
*(Editor's Note: This article was reprinted with permission from the October 1996 Turfgrass Facts, the Turfgrass Resource Center.)*

## **Golf Participation Up 1% Sport Ranks Top-10 in U.S.**

The number of people who played golf more than once in 2001 increased 1 percent compared with participation numbers the previous year, according to an annual research report from the National Sporting Goods Association. The report, which tracks participation in 64 sports, recreation and fitness activities, ranked golf as the tenth most popular sporting activity with 24.3 million participants.

Although it declined more than 12 percent, exercise walking placed above swimming as America's most popular activity, with 71.2 million participants in 2001 vs. 81.3 million in 2000. Swimming drew 54.8 million participants, a 7 percent decrease from 58.8 million in 2000.

Completing the top-10 activities are camping (45.5 million); fishing (44.4 million); exercising with equipment (43 million); bowling (40.3 million); bicycle riding (39 million); billiards/pool (32.7 million); basketball (28.1 million); and golf.



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