

WEEDS and TURF

PEST CONTROL

A SECTION OF PEST CONTROL MAGAZINE

JULY 1962



A
Guest
Editorial

by
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President

of the

Northeastern Weed Control Conference

DR. LAWRENCE G. SOUTHWICK

Dow Chemical Co., Midland, Mich.

New Section Answer to Industry Demand for Weed, Turf Data

Control of unwanted vegetation is one of the oldest activities of man, yet the techniques and concepts in general use today are based largely on relatively recent developments. New herbicide discoveries, better knowledge of herbicidal action and selectivity, new concepts in application methods and equipment — all are contributing to an expanding and a more complex industry.

As is usual when a science develops rapidly and practical application becomes more economically profitable, getting the right information to the right people at the right time assumes increasing importance. This is certainly true with regard to applicators, who need up-to-date use-information, presented clearly, concisely, and correctly to suit the speedy pace of modern American business.

This new section of *Pest Control* magazine will

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Multibillion Dollar Weed, Turf Market Awaits Informed Diligent Applicator

By **J. C. REDD**

President, Redd Industrial Services, Jackson, Mississippi

Past President, National Pest Control Association

ONE OF the best ways for a contract applicator to grow, other than by selling more of his present services, is to add new ones. This is why so many pest control operators, and owners of similar service businesses, have expanded into weed control and turf spraying over the past decade.

Applicators who want to incorporate other pursuits into their present line should make sure their new venture is closely related to the one they're now engaged in. If not, they will have to set up entirely new organizations and consequently defeat their objective: to expand logically and profitably.

PCOs, particularly, want to use their equipment, personnel, and field-gained know-how for addi-

tional, related activities. For this reason, many of them have jumped into the booming demand for industrial weed control, and contract turf spraying.

Few markets look more promising right now. Homeowners tend to build \$50,000 houses, spend \$10,000 decorating inside, and yet only \$100 on their lawn and landscape. These folks have not yet been taught that more people see the outside than the inside of their homes. They have not yet been convinced that the outside should have first attention.

Applicators can offer these homeowners a variety of services. Control of such nuisances as chinch bugs, fire ants, fungus, moles, white grubs, fleas, ticks, chiggers, fall army worms, and



Lawn pest control is an important facet of author Redd's business. These Reddmen are treating both grass and ornamentals around a home in Jackson, Miss. Redd is active in industrial weed control, as well as general structural pest control.



In this article, veteran weed controller J. C. Redd, of Jackson, Miss., shares his background with the novice contract applicator.

other pests in season, can be conducted with the same personnel and equipment presently used for general pest control.

In most cases, the homeowner himself can't take care of these lawn pests. He seeks an organization which can successfully and economically get rid of the invaders in his lawn, whether they're insects, weeds, or diseases.

The luxurious growth of most shrubs and ornamentals, and the treatment of lawn pests, usually require sprayers and applicators with high volume and pressure. Homeowners can no longer get control with hand or knapsack sprayers.

Moreover, contract applicators generally offer control of lawn insects and weeds, such as crabgrass, for less than the customer would spend to do it himself. And the chances of failure are greatly reduced when a professional does the job.

Profits in Weed Control

Chemical weed control is another service which is making money for a lot of operators. There are opportunities to control weeds around buildings, parking lots, drive-in theatres, junk yards, fence rows, walkways, lumber yards, and other such sites. After the applicator gains basic knowledge, he may want to go after the big jobs too, such as oil wells, refineries, tank batteries, flow lines, and large industrial plants. Eventually, the ambitious weed controller will tackle railway rights-of-way, utility lines, and turnpikes.

Obviously, there are different

degrees of weed control, ranging from the small job trimming borders of walks with chemical and sprinkler can, to large contracts where an entire soil area is to be sterilized. Cost to the consumer may range from \$5 to \$10,000.

Some typical charges for weed and turf pest control are shown in Figure 1.

Equipment can be as simple as the sprinkler can, or as expensive as high capacity hydraulic sprayers and blowers. "Trial and error" experience from small jobs will help the applicator get ready for the big ones.

PCOs have noticed many of their regular household pest control customers are beginning to see how important it is to also include

accounts for the same unit of time because there is not yet enough volume in vegetation control to benefit from lower costs.

Managers often use costs of labor and materials to decide if a job is profitable. Labor and goods should not exceed 40% of the price charged. For example, if labor costs 30%, then materials should not run over 10%. Or, if materials came to 16%, then labor should not be more than 24% of the price charged.

Let's compare the income and profit of a 2-man crew working on a weed job with one working for the same length of time on a termite job. On a weed job, a 2-man crew working one day should bring in a minimum of \$500. After the

Figure 1. Sample Charges for Outdoor Services

| Turf Pest Control | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Season Control | After July 31 |
| 1,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. | \$7.00 per 1,000 sq. ft. | \$4.00 per 1,000 sq. ft. |
| 10,000 to 50,000 sq. ft. | \$5.00 per 1,000 sq. ft. | \$3.00 per 1,000 sq. ft. |
| Weed Control | | |
| 500 to 1,000 sq. ft. | | 2 to 3¢ per square ft. |
| 5,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. | | 0.8 to 1.5¢ per square ft. |
| Industrial Sites of acre or more: | 1st year | — 0.8 to 1.5¢ |
| | 2nd year | — 0.6 to 1.0¢ |
| | 3rd year | — and up — |
| | | 0.5 to 0.8¢ |

turf insect and disease control. This is especially true in the South. It is predicted that in the future few jobs will be taken without including turf pest control with the home contract.

Monthly weed control is different. For it to reach the same degree of permanency, customers have to be convinced:

- (1) that the work can be done satisfactorily,
- (2) that the fee is reasonable and economical, and
- (3) that the work must be done on a regular, sustaining basis to achieve desired results.

Pricing Method

Structural pest control operators considering weed control will have to look at pricing practices. To arrive at a true and just comparison, compare these two types of services on a material and labor basis, using the same time unit.

Normally, more income per job is expected from weed and turf

initial treatment, follow-up service usually requires at least 3 visits which, altogether, should take about as much time and material as the original application. Thus such a job would require 2 crew days at \$32 per day, or \$64 for the job. Normally, materials cost between 15 and 20% of the total price, or about \$100 in this case. Labor and materials for this kind

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Outdoor Market Ripe

(from page W-3)

of job should cost about \$164, leaving a gross profit of \$336. Not included of course are depreciation, administrative expenses, etc.

On the other hand, most termite operators normally expect to produce an average of \$150 per day per 2-man crew, with material cost approximately 10% of the total job. Using the same 2-day basis, the termite crew would produce \$300. With labor cost at \$64 and materials at \$30, gross profit is \$206, compared with \$336 for the weed job.

Termite control is much further advanced; there is presently more repeat work; control procedures have been more or less standardized, and results, in most cases, are fairly well predetermined. Conversely, weed control is in its infancy, and industrial plants, railways, and other prospects have not all been sold yet on the fact that they should pay a sustaining fee to get results which may be more difficult to come by.

It's apparent then that weed controllers should expect more money per unit of work-time, and more gross profit above materials and labor than is realized in structural pest control. It is especially important for an operator just beginning this service to record his material and labor costs accurately, and to compare these with his total volume to make sure labor and material expenses are running well under 40% of total volume.

Seasonal Variations

In some areas, addition of weed control and turf spraying helps



Redd's operations also include a complete lawn maintenance program. To supplement his contract spraying, the Mississippian offers lawn chemicals and tools for resale.

level out seasonal fluctuations in business volume where a firm does both vegetation work and general pest control. Unfortunately, though, in the South, peaks of each activity coincide closely.

In Mississippi, for example, weed control begins in February and continues at peak through May. This is exactly the time when the heaviest concentration of termite activity is experienced.

Turf pest control, on the other hand, begins in late April and runs through September, reaching its peak in July and August. This also coincides very closely with the peaks of general pest control services.

With new developments in soil sterilization, pre-emergence sprayings, and year-round treatments becoming more and more common in industrial applications, it is hoped the changes in business cycles will be lessened.

Possibly the biggest potential, so far as size of individual accounts, is industrial weed control, although some turf work, such as contract golf course spraying, nets large amounts.

Potential Volume

A town of 2,000 should have at least 30 varying types of business establishments which could use some kind of weed control. Each account should be worth an average minimum of \$50, or a total of \$1500 for the town. On this basis, potential in weed control in an urban area should be 75¢ per capita yearly. In areas with more than 10,000 people, the potential is probably 50¢ per capita per year, because the number of business establishments per person generally goes down as population goes up.

Using this formula, a town of 10,000 should bring in \$5,000 in weed control accounts yearly, and a city of 50,000 would bring in \$25,000. This does not include parks, railways, or highways.

As population rises above 100,000, other elements prevent using this system of calculation.

Here are only a few immediate prospects for the PCO turned weed controller: parking lots, drive-ins, theatres, junk yards, fence rows, lumber yards, storage areas, perimeters of buildings, paper mills,

Meeting Dates



Hyacinth Control Society First Annual Meeting, Governor's Club Hotel, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., July 8-11.

U. S. Department of Agriculture Field Day Review of Weed Control, Plant Industry Station, Beltsville, Md., July 11-12.

Cornell Weed Day, New York State College of Agriculture, Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., July 17-18.

International Shade Tree Conference 38th Annual Convention, Jack Tar Hotel, San Francisco, Calif., August 5-10.

National Arborists Association Meeting, in conjunction with International Shade Tree Conference above.

American Society of Plant Physiologists, Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Aug. 27-31.

North Central Weed Control Conference, Hotel Lowry, St. Paul, Minn., Dec. 3-5.

Northeastern Weed Control Conference, Hotel New Yorker, New York, N.Y., Jan. 9-11, 1963.

Southern Weed Control Conference, Admiral Semmes Hotel, Mobile, Ala., Jan. 16-18, 1963.

Weed Society of America Meeting, Pick-Congress Hotel, Chicago, Ill., Feb. 10-13, 1963.

shipyards, oil refineries, manufacturing plants, drainage ditches, oil tank farms, oil wells, walkways, railway yards, sidings, airports, turnpikes, race tracks; any place where vegetation is undesirable.

Another branch of service becoming increasingly popular, especially in the South, is aquatic weed control in lakes, ponds, rivers, etc. Operators in this field will invariably be forced into a lake management program.

Before any operator begins to diversify, he should:

(1) have confidence in what he is doing;

(2) be willing to take some chances;

(3) immediately begin to learn more about the new service; this knowledge comes from consulting experiment stations, watching others in the field, and reading the periodicals;

(4) give his customers good service; and

(5) have his other business well under control so diversification doesn't hurt his bread and butter,

until he is thoroughly established in the new field.

Whereas weed control may fit into the pattern of service for one PCO, turf and ornamental pest control may fit into the pattern of another. Because a PCO has been successful in integrating any of these services with his structural pest control is no reason why these should be compatible in all cases.

If the initial experience is gained by performing small jobs with equipment and labor that is already available, then the PCO will be in a position to withdraw if he encounters difficulties, or go forward to even greater things.

Penco Brochure Offered

A brochure covering uses of its Penco Endothal turf herbicide in southern states has been prepared by Pennsalt Chemicals Corp.

Condensed instructions on application and precautionary measures are included in the illustrated bulletin, available to contract applicators. For a copy, write the company at P. O. Box 1297, Tacoma 1, Wash., and ask for Bulletin S12.

Shoulder-mounted Mist Blowers Good for Weeds, Forester Says

Shoulder-mounted insecticide mist blowers can be used to control "forest weeds" in stands of conifers, according to recent research by a University of Massachusetts scientist.

Trials run in Massachusetts and New Hampshire by Dr. William P. MacConnell, associate professor of forestry at the Amherst school, show these machines are just the thing for applying herbicides in many mixed stands of timber.

Undesirable trees and brush found in forests are controlled by a spray of 2,4,5-T which enters through leaves and flows through the plant's vascular system. Conifers, which have already "hardened off" in August when the mist is applied, are no longer absorbing material through their needles, and are not affected.

This method costs about the same as doing the job from the air, researchers admit, but has other advantages. Ground-applied spray, for example, doesn't drift as far.

This mist blower technique can be used to clear roadsides of weeds, as well as to control mosquitoes and other insects in public parks and picnic grounds.

Another advantage in the shoulder-mounted apparatus, according to Dr. MacConnell, is that while it has an effective range of only about 30 feet straight up, small mist blowers can be carried into areas inaccessible by truck or jeep. And since these shoulder machines spray a low volume of highly concentrated material, only 2½ gallons of solvent per acre are required, an amount easily carried by one man.

Geigy Debuts Metal Chelate

Sequestrene Fe, a new metal chelate said to be highly effective on ornamentals in addition to the customary agricultural applications, has been announced by the Geigy Agricultural Chemicals Company.

An informative sheet on Sequestrene Fe is available to custom applicators who write Geigy at P.O. Box 430, Yonkers, N. Y. Ask for Information Sheet GAC 388.

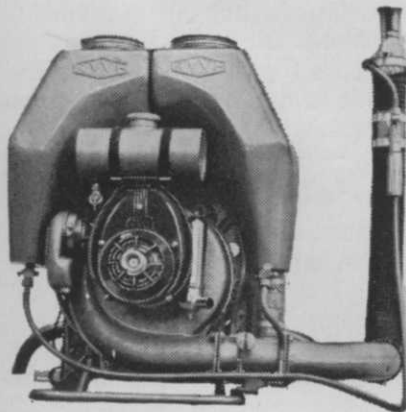
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