

USDA Asks for Comments On Uses of Mercury

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has asked for views on the importance of uses of mercury pesticides in order to determine essential uses as distinct from other less vital uses which might be withdrawn to minimize hazard to the environment.

Although this action was initiated by USDA, evaluation of the comments received and final determination of which uses should be retained and which uses should be withdrawn will be made by the Environmental Protection Agency. Authority for registration of pesticide products under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act was transferred from the Agricultural Department to the new environmental agency on Dec. 2.

Mercury use in pesticides in 1959 declined 10% from the record high of 1968. More than 986,000 pounds or slightly over 16% of the total U.S. mercury consumption was used for pesticides manufacture. Current information on levels of mercury in the environment led to the cancellation by USDA of certain registered mercurial pesticide uses as seed treatment, as algacides or slimicides, and in commercial laundries earlier this year.

Areas of particular concern include uses of mercury on ornamental shrubs, trees and turf.

Written data, views, or arguments regarding the proposed cancellation should be submitted in triplicate to: Director, Pesticides Regulation Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, D.C. 20250.

All submissions must be made no later than 60 days after publication in the Federal Register (Dec. 3). All written submissions will be made available for public inspection.

Dairy Mulch for Turf Works Like Hair Restorer

You can't grow grass on that piece of hard ground out back? Call your nearest dairyman.

This may not be as far-fetched as it sounds, say Ventura County, California farm advisers Richard Baldwin and Ervin Bramhall.

Turf expert Baldwin and dairy expert Bramhall have found that washed dairy manure worked like a "miracle hair restorer" in at least one instance.

Groundkeepers at Olivas Golf

Course, Ventura, were having a lot of trouble with bald spots caused by excess salinity. Almost as soon as they spread grass seed, the seedlings would curl up and die.

Bramhall and Baldwin decided to try washed-and-dried dairy manure as a mulch. They suspected that salt was killing the grass. Since fluffy manure mulch has had most of the salts washed out of it, they figured it might help the grass grow.

They seeded the saltiest spots they could find. Then they arranged for several truckloads of dairy mulch to be delivered from the Chase Brothers dairy at Oxnard.

They spread the mulch at three rates of thickness: 3/16, 3/8, and 3/4 of an inch. They left one seeded area bare of mulch.

Within nine days the mulched grass had sprung up, vigorous and green. Initially the best growth was where the mulch was 3/8-inch thick. Later the thickest mulch treatment looked as good or better.

"Apparently," said farm adviser Baldwin, "the mulch held moisture at the surface of the ground. This kept whatever salt rose to the surface from being concentrated

through evaporation. The salt, in other words, remained in a dilute state. It didn't become strong enough to kill the germinating grass.

"At least, that is our theory of what happened. It could also be a result of keeping the grass seed from drying out."

No Merger, Says Nunes, New Company Instead

An article in the November issue of WEEDS TREES and TURF was misleading, writes John F. Nunes, Jr., of Nunes Turfgrass Nursery, Inc. There was no merger, he said, of Nunes Turfgrass Nurseries, Inc. and Jacobsen Turfgrass Nurseries. Instead, "a new corporation was formed to service the southern portion of California," he explained. The name of the new firm is Nunes-Jacobsen Sod, Inc., with offices at Tehachapi. "Nunes Turfgrass Nurseries, Inc., is still in existence, and is no way involved with the new organization," he added. "And Mr. Jacobsen is no way involved with Nunes Turfgrass Nurseries, Inc."

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