

Government News Business

The Environmental Protection Agency has postponed to June 30 the effective date of the recent ban on further production of most pesticides containing mercury. Administrator Russell Train delayed the effective date of the ban at the request of several producers of mercurial pesticides. The ban originally was effective February 17. The producers reportedly asked for the delay to allow federal courts time to rule on several lawsuits challenging the ban.

More light-duty trucks are to be subject to tighter emission standards under new proposals by the Environmental Protection Agency. The number of pick-up trucks, vans, utility vehicles and off-road vehicles that must meet federal exhaust emission limits will increase by over 50 percent in 1978 under the proposal. In addition, the emission standards for these trucks would be reduced to levels comparable in stringency to those scheduled for 1977 cars.

Building awards rose in January to \$6.39 billion -- a 25 percent leap from a year earlier, which is good news for sod growers and others related to the turf and green industry. Residential building contracts rose 40 percent in January to \$2.16 billion. Also, it appears home mortgage rates may be a bit better this spring. The reason is that thrift institutions are loaded with money to lend. As a result, many real estate experts expect to see mortgage rates dropping at least a quarter percentage point and perhaps a half-point by the time spring house buying gets into full swing. However, any rate downturn may be temporary. Many mortgage lenders see rates inching back up later this year.

Another increase in the minimum wage is coming fast. This time Congress will tie the wage standard to a formula assuring automatic increases from now on. The most likely outcome of informal committee sessions is the wage floor, which rose from \$2 to \$2.30 an hour in January, will be hiked possible to \$2.75. Also, the floor will be indexed to provide automatic boosts. Despite Ford Administration opposition, the bill will move fast. The Senate Labor Committee is already primed to act quickly once the House legislation is passed.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture has issued a full registration to Charles R. Freers of Muscatine, Iowa for his chemical treatment for the prevention and arrest of Dutch elm disease to the states of Missouri, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. Freers said he expects other states will be registered for his product soon.

According to latest figures published by the Bureau of Mines, sales of horticultural perlite grew 19 percent in 1974. Usage increased from about 21,180 short tons in 1973 to 25,370 short tons in 1974. The two-year growth for sales is about 100 percent.

Labeling for Aquazine algicide, a selective chemical that controls nuisance algae and submerged weeds in ponds without affecting all groups of algae or higher plants in the aquatic environment, has been registered by the Environmental Protection Agency according to manufacturer, Ciba-Geigy Corp., Greensboro, N. C. The algicide is a photosynthesis inhibitor thus making it safe to non-photosynthetic organisms including zooplankters, fish and other aquatic animal life.