

Dr. John Hall Moves from Maryland to VPI

Not A Test Tube Rattler

Dr. John Hall, noted for his turfgrass work the last few years at the University of Maryland, this month moved his base of operations to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg. He is turfgrass extension specialist replacing Dr. A. J. Powell, who recently moved to the University of Kentucky.

Dr. Hall is one of the most active turf researchers around when it comes to working with all aspects of the turf industry. "I don't see how a researcher could operate if he did not communicate closely with the industry," he told WEEDS TREES & TURF late one afternoon recently in his office at College Park. "Practical research is still the most prevalent in the turf industry because we are still in our infancy. Few universities can afford to do basic research for the stage we are in now."

To spend time "rattling test tubes", as he calls it, would probably alienate much of the practical side of the industry, he said. When he came to Maryland four years ago, he began building the turf program with his colleagues from this practical approach, evaluating herbicides to advise people in the field and heavy testing in management and variety trials.

He works closely with golf course superintendents, sod producers and other green industry associations in his area, and said "it is absolutely essential to get involved because only in association meetings and industry contacts can you find out on what to emphasize research." Turf people give up their land and maintain much of the areas after researchers like Hall do initial work.

"For example," he said, "we have not had *Fusarium* blight on our research farm since I have been here, so I have had to go out to the people I have met in the associations to work on it."

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He said he tried to stay on the fence when he first came to Maryland, not wanting to make any recommendations or step on anybody's toes, but has learned that by taking stands and giving opinions is where the real service to the industry can be done. "I tried to put out too many fires when I first came here too," he said, "helping people with very real but still singular problems they were having. But I have found out that with the limited time we all have here that the best thing we can do is things like develop educational programs for a larger number of people, write articles on the work we are involved in, and put out mimeos and data sheets on variety testing and things like that."

He said manufacturers and other companies in the industry are also a tremendous help. They are doing more basic research on herbicides and fungicides, and he feels it is absolutely essential to maintain a close relationship with them. "The universities have the reputation that is respected in the industry," he said, "and we do the field testing with the products after the manufacturer does all of the ground work to come up with something he feels will be useful."

The companies make direct contact with researchers like Hall to do studies on the products they develop, and he feels this is a good system. The contact is usually on an individual basis with technical representatives from the various companies.

"I have enjoyed the University of Maryland immensely, and I have enjoyed the people I worked with both in the university and in the field," he said. "It has also been good for me personally because working in the transition zone has enabled me to see both warm and cool season grasses, and insects and diseases you can only see in the transition zone." □