

by Bruce F. Shank, executive editor

Ford joins Deere in mower market

Ford Tractor told its dealers this fall it is entering the commercial mower market, starting delivery in January 1985 of a small line of walk-behind rotary mowers. Ford is the second major agricultural equipment manufacturer to enter the commercial mower market, following Deere's lead this year.

Deere and Ford have the advantage of considerably larger dealer networks than current turf equipment companies. Not all Ford or Deere dealers will carry the commercial mower lines, but the manufacturers predict serious participation by at least 200 to 500 dealers each, compared to less than 60 each for Toro, Jacobsen, and Ransomes.

Another trend involved is the private label manufacturing of walk-behind units by Bunton and Gilson for Deere and Ford respectively. The mowers are made to specifications set by Deere and Ford, but similarities with Bunton and Gilson's Sensation line are obvious. Deere makes its commercial riding mowers in its own plant in Horicon, WI.

Ford Manager of Equipment Marketing Plans Fran Engelhardt said Ford's new commercial line is a natural progression of its large lawn and garden tractors and its industrial tractor and flail mower lines. Ford's commercial mowers meet all consumer safety standards and feature simplified cutting height adjustment, floating deck which stays parallel to the surface, heavy duty bearings with xert fittings on key parts, and Briggs and Stratton IC engines.

Field days alter recommendations

Some turf maintenance customs are being challenged by the latest research findings displayed at turf field days this fall. Although it is important to remember these findings are specific to certain regions, they upset some standard practices in the industry.

Turf-type tall fescues outperformed red fescue and so-called shade tolerant Kentucky bluegrasses in a study shown during the Ohio State Turfgrass Research Field Day in Columbus in September. In addition to Olympic and Falcon turf-type tall fescues performing well in shade, Sabre *Poa trivialis* and Bristol and Touchdown Kentucky bluegrasses looked good. The surprise poor-looking grasses were Pennlawn red fescue and Glade and Baron Kentucky bluegrasses.

Turf fungicides and preemergent herbicides yet to be released by Ciba Geigy, O.M. Scott, Dow, and Du Pont will compete well with current products on the market. Growth regulators coming from Monsanto and Elanco looked very good on the Ohio State plots.

The treatment of Fusarium blight syndrome is being rethought. Research is supporting findings by Cornell Pathologist Richard Smiley that two or three pathogens are responsible for symptoms associated with Fusarium blight. Detweiler and Vargas at Michigan State University are advising, in addition to proper site preparation and mid-day irrigation of disease-prone areas, preventative fungicide treatments with Bayleton or Chipco 26019 or preventative and curative treatments with Tersan 1991, Fungo 50, or Cleary 3336.

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OFFICES

ATLANTA
3091 Maple Drive
Maple Center One Building
Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 233-1817

CLEVELAND
7500 Old Oak Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44130
Editorial: (216) 243-8100

CHICAGO
111 East Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 938-2344

SEATTLE
1333 N.W. Norcross
Seattle, WA 98177
(206) 363-2864

DULUTH
120 West Second Street
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 727-8511

MARKETING REPRESENTATIVES

Dick Gore
Atlanta (404) 233-1817
Ron Kempner
Atlanta (404) 233-1817
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Cleveland (216) 243-8100
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Seattle: (206) 363-2864