

Insect control top priority for Fla. courses

by Shelly Sorkin

The cost of an unchecked insect infestation is no secret to golf course superintendents, especially those in Collier County, FL, where there are more than 30 executive and regulation golf courses for 90,000 residents.

"Maintaining the county's courses to professional standards without destruction from insects and weeds is vital to the county's economic stability," notes Charlie Lowery, Collier County extension agent.

The importance of golf as a business in Collier County is indicative of Florida as a whole. There are approximately 730 golf courses in the state serving local residents and millions of tourists each year.

In southern Florida, sod webworm is particularly damaging to St. Augustine, bermudagrass and bahiagrass from April through December.

"The effects of uncontrolled sod

webworm infestation are devastating," says Dr. Jim Reinert, entomologist who just moved to Texas A&M University from the University of Florida. "Without any control measures, a golf course can be stripped to bare stolons!"

While at the University of Florida, Reinert conducted several studies to evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of insecticide programs. One such test compared about 15 turf insecticides for sod webworm, including the newly-registered Orthene for turf.

"The test plots showed an average population count of 38 to 39 sod webworms and other insect species per four square feet," says Reinert. "All the products offered control, but within four days of applying 1-1/3 to 2-3/4 pounds per acre of Orthene, the population was reduced to zero."

In addition to bermudagrass, bahiagrass, and St. Augustine,

Orthene can be safely applied to dichondra, bluegrass, fescue and bentgrass.

Broad spectrum insect control is the main concern at Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples. Caterpillars, aphids, thrips and host of other tree, ornamental, and turf insects on 440 acres were the responsibility of superintendent Clint Smallridge, C.G.C.S., until recently.

"Many of our plants are sensitive to chemicals," Smallridge pointed out. For example, malathion and diazinon will defoliate hibiscus. Orthene, on the other hand, won't hurt the existing plants and offers the needed insect control without the worry of plant replacement."

Smallridge accepted a position with LESCO last November to develop a series of wholesale stores in Florida.

With 14.3 million golfers playing more than 15 rounds per year, and 3.5 million occasional golfers, a great deal is on the line. As Lowery says, "Golf course maintenance is more than just maintaining a golf course...It's also marketing and public relations. It's made a little easier with the help of effective chemical control measures." **WT&T**



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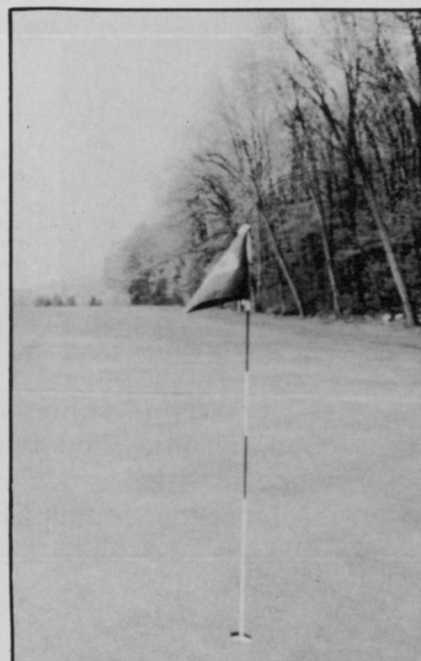
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In southern Florida, university and extension testing compared 15 turfgrass insecticides for control of sod webworm infestations.

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