

LEGISLATION

Diazinon banned on golf courses, sod farms

Portions of the green industry were dealt a blow early in April when EPA administrator Lee Thomas ruled to immediately ban use of the insecticide diazinon on golf courses and sod farms. The chemical is still available for use on home lawns.

"The disappointing thing," said Zach Grant, GCSAA manager of government relations, "is that we were repeatedly assured by EPA there would be no immediate ban."

Thomas stated in a 50-page opinion that Ciba-Geigy presented "inadequate" data regarding the safety of diazinon on golf courses and sod farms. Ciba-Geigy is the primary producer of diazinon and the chief company involved in the fight to retain diazinon registration.

An earlier ruling amended diazinon's label to Restricted Use, which cut the previously-recommended application rate in half.

Ken Weinstein, a Ciba-Geigy attorney, stated: "The administrator has issued a final decision. (Ciba-Geigy



Bill Liles



Doug Fender

has 60 days to appeal."

"We are assessing whether we want to file an injunction and take it to the U.S. Court of Appeals," added Bill Liles, director of specialty product sales for Ciba-Geigy.

It should be noted that golf courses and sod farms account for about 10 percent of all the U.S. diazinon use.

GCSAA government relations committee chairman Bill Roberts, superintendent at Lochmoor Golf Club in Grosse Pointe Woods, Mich., was miffed by the EPA ruling. "It's beyond me how EPA could cancel registration

on diazinon for golf courses and sod farms and leave it available to the landscape industry."

Doug Fender, executive director of the American Sod Producers Association (ASPA), was equally incensed. "The damage of losing diazinon is the loss of a very effective broad-spectrum insecticide," Fender said. "There are some other chemicals but probably not as broad spectrum. It's gonna hurt us."

GCSAAs Grant noted, however, that superintendents could find alternatives to diazinon. "One thing we're hoping is that Triumph (a lawn insecticide from Ciba-Geigy) gets labelled for golf courses," Grant said.

Fender further questioned the reasoning that attached sod farms to golf courses in the ruling. "One of the damning things in all of this is that (EPA) had an 18-year history of bird kills (related to the case) and none occurred on a sod farm," he said. "But they decided that birds would view sod farms the same as golf courses."

READERS RESPOND

How have the new postal rates affected your business?

Effective April 4, 1988, third class postal rates increased 25 percent. Despite the fact that the increase came after many spring direct mail campaigns, we asked some landscape managers what impact that would have on their direct mail marketing.



"Aside from the Yellow Pages, Chem Turf relies entirely on direct mail for its advertising. We're in the process of sending out a mailing of 10,000 pieces (contacted just after the rate increase) The added cost for the mailing is about \$1,000. We'll probably end up raising the basic service rates because of insurance, so we'll just incorporate the new postage rate into that."

—George Meeley
Chem Turf
Anaheim, Ca.



"We can't stop that. There's not a hell of a lot you can do about it. It's just going to be passed on to the consumer eventually. We did our direct mail already (cost: upwards of \$3,000) so we got the bulk of it out of the way. We're in a rural area and mailings work well for us, but we may have to go to one mailing and do more advertising in the other media. We try to maintain a good mix. TV is still the best."

—Steve Nuss
Highland Park Lawn
Grand Island, Neb.



"Every time something like this happens, it raises prices. Maybe not immediately, but when you figure it out at the end of the year, it contributes to a price increase. It all adds up."

—Bill Thornton
Thornton Landscaping
Maineville, Ohio