

## A little lesson in politics

Those of you who made it this far in the magazine may have noticed a piece in our Green Industry News about the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) banning diazinon on golf courses and sod farms. In looking at the ruling, a few questions popped into my mind on how that fine example of a "working" bureaucracy handled the case.



For starters, why is the EPA attacking golf courses and sod farms in the first place? They account for about 10 percent of all the diazinon used in the country annually. Admittedly, some bird kills involved diazinon, mostly from misapplication. But the EPA had already put diazinon into the Restricted Use category, cutting its recommended application rate in half. Also, the EPA used an industry-wide case study of kills to determine the fate of the users of 10 percent of the material. And none of the kills occurred on sod farms. Not only that, the applicators affected by the ruling, sod farmers and superintendents, are some of the most experienced and best trained applicators in the industry. The safest, that is.

Incidentally, the other 90 percent of the material is used by crop farmers, lawn care operators and homeowners.

Not trained professional commercial applicators. Homeowners. Doctors, lawyers, salesmen, whatever. Generally, these people don't know their pesticides from a hole in the ground. Many reason that if two pounds of a product per 1,000 is good, four pounds must

be better.

But this is where the politics really kicks in. The homeowners are a much larger group (of voters) than commercial applicators. If the homeowners get regulated, they might complain. Then they might find out which people (our legislators) allowed current EPA employees into regulatory decision-making positions. Then somebody might lose a job (get voted out of office or fired if the person is appointed to a position like, say, the EPA administrator). If the EPA weren't so paranoid about those "environmentalists" representing at most one percent of the population (probably less), then maybe, just once, they'd make an intelligent decision regarding proper use of pesticides. But I guess it doesn't work that way, does it? Nope. So what happens? The pros get burned, the homeowners do damage and the bureaucracy lives happily ever after.

Now, I give credit to Ciba-Geigy, the American Sod Producers Association and GCSAA, among others. They put up a good fight. But, sometimes it just doesn't matter. Maybe the green industry just needs to complain a bit louder.

Jeff Sobul, associate editor

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