

HOT TOPICS

Public wants pesticides used responsibly

WASHINGTON—There's no question in the minds of consumers about the benefits of specialty pesticides like those used on golf courses and home lawns. But there are concerns about their responsible use, according to results of a survey commissioned by RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment).

The survey, undertaken by Charlton Research of San Francisco, focused on attitudes of the general public rather than consumers who specifically purchase and use pesticides.

Eight focus groups were held in Pittsburgh, Seattle, Milwaukee and Birmingham. Each group was composed of 9-10 adults of mixed age, gender, area of residence and location.

Focus group information was combined with a national telephone survey of 1,000 adults.

"Our research shows that we need to help the public better understand several issues relative to the value of pesticides, as well as their responsible use," says Alan James, RISE's executive director.

"As the official voice of the pesticide industry, RISE will work with audiences (ranging) from government and industry influentials to the media and consumers, to increase understanding of the value of pesticides as pest management tools which help enhance the quality of life and the environment when used responsibly."

Several of RISE's planned initiatives are educating consumers on responsible pesticide use, promoting the benefits of pesticides, and increasing awareness about the training certified applicators must undergo.

SURVEY REVELATIONS

- Many Americans are willing to balance their personal and environmental health and safety concerns with the perceived benefits of pesticides.
- Respondents think pesticides are used more by other people in their local government than by themselves or their neighborhood circles.
- Most people use some form of pesticides.
 - 64% use pesticides to control household insects/rodents
 - 48% use pesticides to control garden insects
 - 38% use pesticides on their home lawns
 - 10% currently use a lawn care company
- Controlling termites, insects and bacteria with pesticides is seen as an important personal health and safety protection issue. It is more important than having a beautiful lawn or the public cost of highway maintenance. *If a personal protection issue is at stake, a large majority of people will override their initial concerns about pesticides.*
- People strongly believe pesticides are safe when used as directed. But they are not certain if their neighbors are using pesticides safely. They also believe that professional applicators use stronger pesticides, but are trained to apply them safely.
- Only about 50% believe pesticides made available to the public are thoroughly tested.
- The most trusted source of pesticide information is from independent local government agencies like extension agents, poison control centers and health departments.
- "Maintaining public health" was the reason given by almost 80% of the respondents for applying pesticides to control pests and weeds in public areas.

ELSEWHERE

Sales up most in Eastern U.S., page 30

Scag writes thanks to LM, page 30

Olympic champ is featured speaker, page 30

Literature and industry events, page 32