

HOT TOPICS

Clinton, EPA detail pesticide control plan

WASHINGTON— The Clinton administration wants to establish stricter testing standards for agricultural pesticides.

Environmental Protection Agency director Carol Browner also says the agency would examine sources of pesticide exposure, from playgrounds to drinking water.

A proposed bill would:

- Require comprehensive studies of the pesticide levels in food eaten by infants and children.
- Set a single health-based, scientific standard for all pesticides used on all foods, covering all health risks.
- Decree a seven-year deadline for banning pesticides that cannot be proven safe.
- Reduce pesticide use by helping farmers institute alternative methods of pest control.

The bill is a response to a recent USDA study which found pesticide residues on more than 60 percent of fruits and vegetables sampled. Most of those residues, however, were below federally established tolerance levels.

The bill, as proposed by the Clinton administration, would define a pesticide residue as unacceptable if it causes one excess case of cancer per million cases.

If passed, the legislation would change how the government determines the cancer risk from exposure to control products and require that infants and children receive special protection because, according to the bill, they eat more fruits and vegetables in proportion to their body weight.

Additionally, the legislation would scrutinize control product use around public grounds and monitor pesticide

residues in drinking water more fiercely.

The legislation would widen the parameters by which it judges product safety, requiring new levels of testing for possible effects on the brain, reproductive system and immune system. A "negligible risk" standard would mean the product could only be used in amounts where there is a "reasonable certainty of no harm."

The bill was carefully worded to enlist the support of the public—with the stated concern for "infants and children," and by saying the bill is meant to "ease the burden" on farmers by providing them with non-chemical means of pest control.

But the bill would also increase the amount of paperwork farmers do to document their chemical use.

Ripple effect—The turf and ornamental chemicals market would certainly be affected by the legislation, as many agricultural control products are used in the specialty chemical industry.

Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), says the level of scrutiny the administration wants to impose on product testing is not new, but certainly would be more extensive,

"These products undergo 120 tests,

including testing in those areas," says James, "however, the procedures and science are not in place (for the higher level of testing). The current tests cover most of those areas adequately."

"If the new law goes into effect and imposes a larger range of testing," says James, "the EPA will be further burdened. There's no way it could accomplish the testing" (within the seven-year deadline).

According to James, the agency is having enough trouble as it is, trying to reregister products under existing standards.

The Clinton proposal will compete with two other pending bills. One, a less-restrictive bill, has the support of the food industry and American Farm Bureau Federation, and has a majority of support in the House and 20 sponsors in the Senate.



James: Proposed bill would burden EPA and industry.

2,4-D/cancer link 'weak' says EPA panel

WASHINGTON—An EPA-sanctioned panel says that existing studies of the herbicide 2,4-D have not demonstrated a cause-and-effect link with cancer, according to a report by the Industry Task Force on 2,4-D Research Data.

The group convened in April of 1993 to evaluate the carcinogenicity of 2,4-D after studies suggested a cancer link. It issued its latest report in late March of this year.

The EPA must now consider these latest finding in evaluating the need for further regulatory action on 2,4-D.

More than 4000 studies have been made of 2,4-D since 1948.

ELSEWHERE

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Agronomist, researcher James 'Jack' Murray dead of cancer

BRADENTON, Fla.—James "Jack" Murray, former USDA research agronomist, died on May 15 at his home here after a long battle with cancer. He was 54.

Murray was an internationally-known expert in turfgrass breeding and management.

Throughout his professional career, Murray authored or contributed to 104 scientific publications, 47 technical reports and 26 work progress reports.

He served on many committees and organizations within the turfgrass community, including the Turfgrass Division of the Crop Science Society of America, the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation and the International Turfgrass Society.

Murray's research efforts led to the development of Belturf Kentucky bluegrass and Belair zoysiagrass. Belturf has

been used as a parent in producing improved Kentucky bluegrass cultivars like Adelphi, Majestic, Eclipse and America.

Murray also developed tall fescue with improved stress tolerance and improved tolerance of aluminum and acid soil conditions.

In the mid-'80s, Murray developed a zoysiagrass and tall fescue mix that provides a year-round green turf with less maintenance.

Murray investigated standard maintenance practices such as mowing and water and discovered methods to minimize



Jack Murray

maintenance costs while maintaining quality turfgrass.

Murray was a founder of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) and its first director from 1980-1988. The NTEP tests turfgrasses nationwide and provides the most comprehensive information on grass selection in the U.S.

Murray was also a charter member of the National Sports Turf Council.

A frequent speaker at local, state, national and international meetings, Murray provided consultation on the management of turfgrass at many sites, including the White House and Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C. and the Laurel and Pimlico Race Tracks in Maryland.

Murray is survived by his wife Bobbie and son Paul. The family asks that donations be sent to the Hospice of Southwest Florida, 6055 Rand Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34238; or to the Woodland Baptist Church, 9607 State Rd. 70 East, Bradenton, FL 34202.

Penn State develops mulch from newspapers, magazines for golf, landscape markets

STATE COLLEGE, Pa.—A new landscape mulch made from chopped newspapers, magazines and other paper can be used in place of traditional mulch, says its developer, a professor at Penn State University.

The mulch consists of small green pellets that resemble rabbit food. It's spread over areas such as golf courses and lawns where grass seed is applied. The pellets expand when wet, so only a thin layer is needed to cover a large site.

The new product, for which a patent is pending, is called Pennmulch. Agronomy instructor George Hamilton developed it.

"Traditional mulches present problems," says Hamilton. "Hydromulching requires an expensive machine and a high-volume water source. Straw often contains weed seeds, tends to blow away, and is difficult to store and handle. In addition, soil micro-organisms that break down straw also deplete soil nitrogen."

Pennmulch pellets can be spread by hand or by using conventional spreaders. It can also be used in combination with a starter fertilizer.

"Although it was designed for use in

grass seedbeds," Hamilton continues, "we're looking into other uses, such as vegetable gardens and ornamental plantings."

Pennmulch is being manufactured by Penn Mulch Inc., Pittsburgh. Last fall, 50 tons were produced and about 40 tons were sold to turfgrass and landscape companies.

"We're researching new sources of paper, developing a low-cost pneumatic spreader to apply the mulch, and variations of the product containing fertilizer and grass seed," Hamilton explains.

"Material-wise, it's more expensive than hydroseeding or straw," he admits. "But as we increase production facilities in the next six months, the cost should come down. Plus, depending on the site you want to use it at, there could be considerable labor savings in applying it."

Pennmulch is being distributed mainly throughout the northeastern section of the U.S., but can be freighted anywhere in the country.

To find out more about the product, call Penn Mulch Inc. at (800) 792-5537.

Deadline Sept. 23:

New worker law hits golf courses

LAWRENCE, Kans.—The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America says the new Worker Protection Standard for Agricultural Pesticides will have an impact on the operations of many golf courses.

In its publication *Government Relations Briefing*, the GCSAA noted that the Worker Protection Standard covers all golf courses that produce turfgrass or ornamental plants, whether for use exclusively on the golf course or for general public sale.

"It requires employers to provide workers with personal protection equipment, safety training and warning signs to protect laborers from hazards stemming from exposure to pesticides," the *Briefing* article said.

The new federal standards will take effect Jan. 1, 1995, but pesticide safety training materials must be developed and distributed by Sept. 23 of this year.

The bill stipulates that a worker may enter an area treated with a pesticide during the restricted entry interval on the label if four conditions are met, one of which is disallowing any hand labor. For more information, contact GCSAA's government relations program at (913) 832-4470.

INFO CENTER

Selected books and videos for the industry

PLANT LOCATOR...The Florida Nurserymen & Growers Association's annual Plant Locator was scheduled to be published at the end of May. The revised and expanded text will cover all aspects of the horticulture industry. The Locator now includes floriculture, trees, palms and cycads, ground covers, vines, aquatic and woody ornamentals as well as foliage and allied supplies and serices. Contact the FNCA at (407) 345-8137.

VIDEOS HELP TRAIN STAFF...The Professional Plant Growers Association has three short videos to help landscapers and retailers train their staffs and success-

fully install and maintain bedding plants.

● *Blooming Profits* covers the care and merchandising of bedding plants;

● *Flowering Plants* covers the care and merchandising of flowering potted plants;

● *Success with Bedding Plants* covers how to select, install and maintain bedding plants. To order, contact the association at (800) 647-7742.

SEED CULTURE GUIDE...The newly-revised and updated edition of the *Ball Culture Guide: The Encyclopedia of Seed Germination, 2nd Ed.*, provides in-depth germination and scheduling information for professional floriculture growers on

more than 160 of the most popular seed-grown crops. The guide includes information on bedding plants, flowering and foliage potted plants, herbs, cut flowers, and perennials plus an all new chapter on ornamental grasses. The guide costs \$39. Contact Ball Publishing at (708) 208-9089.

PLANT LOCATOR...The National Institute on Park and Grounds management has just published a new management guide entitled, "A Basic Handbook on Athletic Field Maintenance." The guide contains 40 pages and 20 illustrations. Contact the Institute at P.O. Box 1936, Appleton, WI 54913-1936.

GREEN INDUSTRY EVENTS

What's going on in the industry

JUNE

8: Lofts Seed, Annual Field Day, at the Lofts Ohio site in Wilmington, Ohio. Contact: David Goodwin, (513) 382-1127; (800) 328-1127.

10: Lofts Seed, Annual Field Day, Lofts Maryland, Beltsville, Md. Contact: John Patton, (301) 937-3332; (800) 732-3332.

13-14: Harvard University, Graduate School of Design, courses and workshops related to the planning and design of golf courses and resorts. Includes golf course design, golf/residential site planning; golf course development and golf clubhouse design and site planning. For a catalog, contact the Office of Development and External Relations, GSD, Harvard University, 48 Quincy St., Cambridge, MA 02138; (617) 495-1680.

22: Sports Turf Association Annual Field Day, Guelph Turf Institute, 328 Victoria Rd. South, Guelph, Ontario, Canada. For more information, contact Jane Rivers at 82 Rodney Blvd., Guelph, ON Canada, N1G 2H3; (905) 847-9181

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