

# Pesticides and our image

*Turfgrass managers now have more options to enhance the environmental friendliness of the Green Industry.*

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Much has been written in recent years

about the public's concern over pesticide use especially in urban environments.

This concern has focused not only on public health concerns, but also on potential disruptive environmental effects including fish and birds. One could go on for pages writing about this on-going debate that has been a part of lawn and landscape management.

Unfortunately it has, at times, become part of a rather ugly and unproductive argument over pesticide use based on fact, fiction, and emotion. No one really benefits from such an adversarial approach. Fortunately, the landscape industry's ability to speak responsibly on this issue has improved. Many groups such as the PLCAA and the GCSAA have taken steps to increase the education of turfgrass managers on this issue and to address the questions presented by a concerned portion of the public.

**End to confrontation**

One of the biggest gains we have made in recent years is that we have dropped the confrontational approach. For many years, the most common approach to public education was simply to compare pesticides to all the other risks in one's life and thus attempt to



The landscape management industry should use FQPA as another image-enhancing change.

minimize concern over these chemicals. After all, if the public could be convinced that numerous other risks would probably kill them long before pesticides would, then they would focus their attention elsewhere. Those of us who are not experts in such communication (and I include myself in that group) learned that you cannot diminish the concern over one topic by increas-

ing anxiety on another one. We slowly and painfully learned that no one wins with this approach.

**Educational approach better**

Our more recent efforts on educating the public about pesticide use in the landscape have focused on a clearer, more straightforward approach concerning pesticide use, IPM, and product safety. Fortunately, we have abandoned the



"silent" approach which gave the appearance we had something to hide, the bash the environmentalist approach which severely crippled our own credibility, and the previously mentioned "scare tactics" approach that told the public the world was filled with substances more deadly than pesticides.

I hope this industry continues to pursue this aggressive course of actions that presents the facts and provides the public with a realistic picture of the direction our industry is headed.

## Research brings better products

We are not using the same pesticides that we used 20 years ago and we are using more compatible ones in a more efficient way. And even more impressive, is that we've probably only begun to reap the benefits of university and industry research that will further enhance our ability to manage turfgrass in a cost-effective manner that is in harmony with everyone's desire to minimize any negative environmental consequences. The future looks very bright for an ever increasing array of options and programs for turfgrass management. Research into landscape pest management has never been as active as it is at this time. Just as we have seen significant benefits over the past decade, we will reap additional benefits over the next few years as this research provides new products and information. I foresee continued development of pesticides with reduced toxicities to man-

and animals. We will undoubtedly see more biological products developed and our improved understanding of pest biology help us use these more effectively.

Just as the products Merit and Mach 2 were well received by the turf industry because of their "reduced risk" fit, other new products will also find their niche. Even though we have seen some biological materials enter the marketplace and disappear due to poor performance or lack of fit in the turfgrass industry, we now have a better understanding of how to make similar products work.

I also see continued success in better forecasting ability for a variety of pest problems.

Our image is dependent upon the public being aware of the fact that we remain on the cutting edge of science (and there is a lot of science underway in landscape management) and new research is often focusing on addressing consumer concerns. New equipment to improve pesticide application efficiency and reduce drift has been available for several years. Several major manufacturers are getting involved in the development and marketing of such equipment so the future for such equipment appears bright. The biological products may receive the greatest benefit from the use of injection equipment.

## FQPA questions, industry answers

A final area that will have an impact, not only on how we conduct our business, but also

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on our image is the implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996. One might ask how a law that we have no control over could impact our image and it is a reasonable question. We can have an impact on the implementation and secondly, its final deployment will affect what products we can and cannot use in the landscape. Hopefully this will give the public more confidence. However, while one would assume that any new law regulating pesticides would instill greater public confidence, we must remember two things.

The FQPA will have some teeth to it and will have an impact on what products are available to use. The EPA has begun the formidable task of reviewing one third of all pesticides including the organophosphates and carbamates by August 1999 and all pesticides within 10 years. Many did not realize that under the FQPA all pesticides of similar modes of action (like the organophosphate insecticides) would be grouped together to determine residue exposures and risks. All uses, not just food residues, but turf, landscape, and household uses would also be lumped together to determine exposure and risk. Furthermore, children's exposure is given a 10x safety factor. Each group of pesticides then

has a risk cup, or an amount of allowable exposure. Under the new system it appeared that many pesticides far exceeded this allowable risk cup and many uses would be lost. This could be especially true for compounds that had many registered use sites including agriculture, turf, ornamental, household (eg. chlorpyrifos).

Once the FQPA is fully implemented, the landscape maintenance industry should use it as another image enhancing change. It will change how we do business and undoubtedly some products will be lost to the landscape industry. However, this should be another step in upgrading public confidence in our use of pesticides in the urban environment. Let's tell the public about our advances, adopt new technologies, and help guide and accept new regulations developed to create even greater public confidence in pesticide use laws.

We all stand to benefit.  
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