

industry almanac

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Say goodbye to Dursban

EPA SAYS PESTICIDE POSES HEALTH RISK TO CHILDREN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Landscape managers will no longer be able to apply the popular pesticide Dursban now that its manufacturer, Dow AgroSciences, has agreed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to voluntarily cancel most in and around the home uses of it in the U.S.

The EPA contends that Dursban, manufactured by Dow AgroSciences, poses a health risk to children because it could harm their brains and

nervous systems. The contention is based on a study by Dow that found that chlorpyrifos, sold under the trade names Dursban and Lorsban, causes brain damage in fetal rats whose mothers were given the pesticide.

Despite the study, Bruce Miehle, general manager for Turf and Ornamental Products at Dow, insisted on chlorpyrifos' safety. "Because of FQPA (Food Quality Protection Act),
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Life after Dursban?

Now that the EPA has canceled Dursban, the question is, "Is there life after chlorpyrifos?" The answer in many corners is, "Yes."

First, remember that you can use Dursban under its current label indefinitely, and the EPA stated in *The Washington Post* that "the compound (Dursban) poses no imminent threat to public health, and consequently won't order a recall of products containing it." But there are alternatives.

Tim Maniscalco, Leader, Government & Public Affairs Urban Pest Management for Dow AgroSciences, says that while they don't cover as broad a spectrum and usage as Dursban, Dow products Spinosad and Conserve are comparable alternatives. Pyrethroids such as Talstar, Astro, Scimitar and Deltagard help manage surface insects such as chinch bugs, billbugs and sod webworms. Mach 2, Merit and Flagship can handle white grubs and a number of other chewing pests.

As to whether Dow's production of Dursban alternatives will step up, Maniscalco said he was not sure. "Production will depend on demand," he said.

Maniscalco couldn't offer specifics on any new products being developed for the turf and ornamental market. "We have a continued, on-going research effort in the turf and ornamental area, and we will focus our research people on that," he said.

Green Industry responds

Since the EPA's announcement regarding Dursban, Tom Delaney, executive vice president of PLCAA, has fielded calls from concerned PLCAA members.



Tom Delaney

"Where landscape professionals may have more problems is with commercial accounts or in public areas like parks or recreation sites," Delaney said. "And there's a different relationship between the homeowner and a landscape company and the general public and a company. The homeowner has more trust and receives specific benefits from the company. But the general public has more questions and are more likely to say, 'I don't want it on my ball-field where my kids play.'"

"Customers happen to be more educated than the general public," Delaney said.

"They hear all kinds of stories about saccharin and everything and are less likely to put a lot of weight on a flash in the pan article in the news."

Allen James, executive director of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment (RISE), predicted a bleak future for other pesticides. "Compared to earlier decisions on other pesticides, it sets a track record and future ones will be treated the same," he said. "There's nothing to say they'll be more even-handed with other products. The process is broken, not the pesticide."

Debra Holder, executive director of ALCA, also voiced concerns about the future.

"With Dow AgroSciences announcing their agreement with the EPA on changes in the use of insecticides containing chlorpyrifos, we recognize that there will be changes and recommend that our landscape contractor follow the guidelines outlined," Holder said. "However, we do have concerns that the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 appears to be setting standards that are not necessarily accepted by the scientific community or other regulatory boards internationally."