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Becker Underwood acquires MicroBio

AMES, IA — Becker Underwood, Inc. acquired UK-based MicroBio Group Ltd. The acquisition includes the exclusive production and marketing rights of all MicroBio biofertilizers and biopesticides for the professional turf, agriculture and greenhouse markets.

Remember your absentee ballot

INDIANAPOLIS, IN — This year's Green Industry Expo is set for Nov. 3-7 at the Indiana Convention Center. Tuesday, Nov. 7, is election day, so if you're planning to attend the GIE and intend to vote, consider voting by absentee ballot (at least two weeks in advance). You can find out your state's voting requirements by calling your local election official.

Legionnaires outbreak traced to soil

ATLANTA, GA — Two women from Oregon and Washington are believed to have contracted Legionnaires' disease from potting soil in the first such cases ever reported in the U.S. A California man's death from Legionnaires' in May may also have been connected to potting soil, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said. Potting soil has previously been blamed for outbreaks in Australia and Japan.

Legionnaires' disease is a form of pneumonia that was discovered after an outbreak that killed 34 people at a 1976 American Legion convention at a Philadelphia hotel.

RISE predicts uphill struggle

WASHINGTON — Pesticide activists' attacks on the use of specialty chemicals will become more of a critical issue for professional applicators, predicted Allen James, president of RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment), at the association's annual meeting here last month.

"The intent is not just to attack our industry, but to destroy it," James said. He named various conflict areas at the local, state and federal levels.

The growing movement to include pesticide use as a key issue in children's health leaves both pesticide producers and applicators vulnerable, James noted. "They have found the one area where we're the most vulnerable."

While the specialty chemical manufacturing industry backs its case with comprehensive research, the movement is having success, especially with regulators, said RISE staffers.

Rampant myths

Fred Langley, RISE manager of state government relations, noted key initia-

tives to limit or eliminate pesticide use in Massachusetts, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Minnesota and New Mexico, which either passed or were defeated narrowly.

Expect more pressure or local or statewide pesticide regulation in the future, Langley predicted. The groups are active, networked and at many levels, and industry data means very little to them. "Myths are rampant at those levels," he said.

David Crow, legislative contact for RISE, predicted a dramatic turn for the worst if the Gore-Lieberman party wins the November election. Sen. Barbara Boxer's (D, CA) many efforts to limit pesticides on federal properties will continue, he predicted, along with several other Administration and legislative efforts.

All RISE staffers called for a strong defense of pesticide testing and safety, plus education on the destructive and unhealthy effects of pests.

—Sue Gibson

CLIPPINGS

Commercial mower sales to remain strong, says OPEI

ALEXANDRIA, VA — The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) predicts that while shipments of all consumer product categories will be slightly down in 2001 due to rising mortgage rates and declining housing starts and resales, commercial mower sales will continue to be strong.

For commercial turf equipment, intermediate size walk-behinds were down slightly in 2000 but OPEI predicts an increase in 2001. Commercial riding rotary turf mowers continued their strong growth in 2000, and OPEI says those sales will continue to be strong in 2001.

For the 2000 model year, consumer walk-behinds lost .4% to 5,901,846 units, while all riding units reached 1,662,836 units, a 3.2% increase.

