

# ALL THINGS CONSIDERED

## Nice Guys Sometimes Finish Last

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**T**HE TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES in the golf course superintendent's responsibilities over the last decade have forced us to deal with new ethical situations. Can you in good faith dispute the following statements:

- Pesticides should not be used in any manner inconsistent with the label.
- There should be no exceptions, no bending of the rules, and no circumventing the intent of the law concerning the use of pesticides on golf courses.
- Those who obey the rules should profit; those who "cheat" should suffer.

Unfortunately, it often doesn't work that way. Put yourself in the following situations.

### Situation 1

You are a golf course superintendent. *Poa annua* is beginning to invade your new greens. There is a new herbicide on the market that very effectively removes *Poa* from greens, but it is labeled only for use on tees and fairways. The manufacturer acknowledges the product is safe for greens, but since only a very small amount of the product must be purchased to treat greens, the manufacturer decides there is simply not enough profit to be made to offset the cost of changing the label and dealing with liability issues.

As a superintendent, it is easy to rationalize the use of the product since it would be used on greens at a fraction of the rate already approved for fairways and tees. The product is being used by others in town, and their greens are making progress while yours are losing ground. This fact is not unnoticed by your members, and you believe that if you don't do something to keep *Poa* out of the greens, your job is in jeopardy.

### Situation 2

Earthworms are causing major problems in your fairways. The very strong pesticides applied years ago by your predecessor have lost their effectiveness, and now the earthworms have returned with a vengeance. The worms are active to the point that the landing areas are severely disrupted, which greatly

detracts from the appearance and playability of the course. Again, the players are upset to the point that you are worried about your career.

The guys across town have found that by applying certain fungicides or insecticides to the fairways the earthworm activity can be sharply curtailed. You know that control of earthworms is included on any pesticide label since worms are considered to be beneficial soil organisms. However, it is easy to rationalize that there is bound to be some disease or insect activity in the fairways, and that applying the pesticide is not technically illegal. If earthworms happen to be suppressed as a by-product of the application, all the better.

### Situation 3

You are an agronomist making your living as a turfgrass consultant. There are other consultants in the industry who are more than willing to bend the rules to "help" their

clients. You are concerned about losing business because your suggestions may not be as effective as your competitor's. You feel strongly that some of the regulations are based more on politics than science. Your clients want answers, and if you will not provide them, they will go to someone who will.

Although things are not as black and white as some would like to believe, there is only one proper choice for the people in these scenarios: Pesticides should not be used or recommended except as specified on the label. As tough as it is, the only good option is to follow the rules, even when we don't like them or feel that they are unreasonable.

As environmental regulations further limit pesticide use, the condition of golf courses will be affected. Golfers will have to accept the fact that there are no simple solutions to these and many other problems. Unfortunately, until they do, the turfgrass professionals who choose to follow the rules will suffer the most.



*Earthworms are a problem on this green, but would you apply a pesticide to suppress the population?*