

Pesticide Runoff From Home Towns At Ag Progress

UNIVERSITY PARK - Visitors to this year's Ag Progress Days will have a chance to see how Penn State researchers are testing ways in which pesticide runoff from home lawns affects water quality.

"Water Quality and Your Life" is the theme of this year's Ag Progress Days, to be held August 19-21 at the College of Agriculture's Rock Springs research facility.

Thomas Watschke, professor of turfgrass science, is conducting studies on experimental turfgrass plots to learn how chemical runoff affects the water supply. The study is being conducted at Penn State's Landscape Management and Water Quality Research Center.

Dr. Watschke and his assistants apply various pesticides and fertilizers to sloped plots of seeded and sodded turfgrass that range in quality from thinly vegetated to thickly vegetated. Rainwater runs into catch basins, where automatic equipment measures the rate and amount of runoff every 60 seconds. The water samples are then collected so fertilizer and pesticide content can be analyzed.

Dr. Watschke's exhibit at Ag Progress Days will include

enlarged color photographs of the runoff test site, including closeups of the measuring equipment. Captions that describe the research will accompany the photos.

The exhibit will also feature a model of the test plots—a 6'x3' slab of sod mounted on a tilted bed. "Through the photos and the

model, we want to show people coming by that this type of research can be done, that it is being done and that results are forthcoming," Dr. Watschke says.

Although data on pesticide and fertilizer content in the runoff is not yet available, the researchers have found that a thick, healthy lawn reduces runoff and allows

water to be absorbed. "We've found differences of as much as 15 times between runoff from a high-quality lawn and that from a patchy lawn with a lot of weeds," Dr. Watschke says. "I think further results will show that a thick, healthy lawn will retain most of the pesticides applied to it."

Other exhibits at Ag Progress Days will include a demonstration of how microscopic insect life in streams indicates water quality, facts and figures on acid rain in Pennsylvania, a Penn State-designed home water treatment system for sulfur and iron removal and a model showing recommended drainage procedures to control runoff from livestock pens.

Dept. of Ag Urged To "Regain Profitability"

WASHINGTON, D.C. - An independent board of agricultural users has urged the Department of Agriculture to refocus policies that would "regain profitability," rather than continuing to emphasize expanding production.

In order to achieve the objective of profitability, American agriculture must "reduce production costs—while maintaining or increasing yields—by making prudent use of available tools, particularly new biotechnological strategies," the board reported.

The National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board (UAB) makes its

recommendations to the Secretary and the Congress in its budget and program review. These two annual reports are mandated by Congress.

The UAB is comprised of 25 members from private agricultural producers and suppliers to review agricultural science and education policies and to make recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture. The current co-chairmen are Dr. William E. Marshall, President of the Microbial Genetics Division of Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., in Johnston, Iowa, and Dr.

David Stevens of the Diamond Scientific Co., in Des Moines, Iowa.

"The U.S. Agricultural system needs to focus on profitability in order to provide America with staying power in world competition. Currently, competition is dominated by the battle of the deep pockets—who can survive the longest in subsidized markets," the report states.

"The recent collapse in U.S. world export market share implies that the U.S. farmer's ability to compete in world trade has eroded

during the past three to five years," the report continues. "This issue has significant ramifications not only for the future of U.S. farmers, but also for the future of rural agribusinesses, especially in the Midwest and other major farm states."

Copies of this free publication can be obtained by writing the UAB, Room 316-A, Administration Building, USDA, 12th and Independence, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250. The Board welcomes public comments on the report.

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