

# Look What's Out There

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<http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/>

## **EPA Announces Tolerance Milestone**

On August 2, EPA announced that it had met a significant milestone for food safety by reassessing more than 6,400 allowable pesticide residues on food (tolerances) to ensure that they satisfy the tougher food safety standard contained in the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996. Following the announcement, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), who has worked closely with EPA on this issue, disseminated a statement that was highly critical of the Agency. The EPA then responded.

To the allegation that the EPA has falsely claimed to have met the statutory deadline for pesticide tolerance reassessment, the Agency rebutted that it has indeed met the Congressionally-mandated deadlines in the Food Quality Protection Act of 1996 to reassess two-thirds of the existing pesticide tolerances.

To NRDC's characterization that EPA's approach to tolerance reassessment as involving "Enron-like accounting," the Agency countered that this kind of blatantly charged language is wholly without merit and profoundly unfair to the dedicated EPA staff and the many stakeholders who have invested valuable time and energy into making tolerance reassessment a success. EPA stands by the integrity of the program. The methods used to determine when a tolerance has completed the reassessment process are accurate, time-tested and open for full scrutiny throughout.

In response to NRDC's claims that the Agency has failed to review the high priority

pesticides, the Agency stated that it has worked under a systematic approach that prioritizes for reassessment and risk mitigation specific pesticides that may pose the greatest risks to public health. In a consent agreement signed in 2001, NRDC agreed with EPA to an aggressive schedule to reassess certain pesticides of particular concern. To date, EPA has successfully met all the deadlines for expeditious review of the priority pesticides in that agreement, and the Agency is on track to meet the remaining deadlines for the additional pesticides. In addition, EPA prioritized the evaluation of pesticide uses that involve children's food, and has completed the reassessment for approximately two-thirds of those tolerances. These actions reflect the true record of focusing on the potentially riskiest pesticides first. This represents a major accomplishment for food safety, and one which assures the public that the U.S. continues to have among the safest food supplies in the world. Finally, NRDC asserted that by releasing the press statement on a Friday afternoon, the Agency was somehow avoiding public scrutiny. To that, EPA responded that the announcement reflected the completion of three years of work and was released on Friday because the deadline fell on a Saturday. EPA is very proud of the concerted efforts to accomplish this task. In conclusion, EPA, along with the public, industry, growers, consumer groups, states, the public health community and others, have all worked diligently to implement FQPA using a transparent, open process, with sound scientific principles, while meeting statutory deadlines with integrity. (EPA Pesticide Program Update, 8/7/02).

## Termite Bait Efficacy Testing Guidelines Debated

The EPA's FIFRA Scientific Advisory Panel met during the end of July to review proposed guidelines that were drafted to develop a consistent testing protocol which registrants could use to demonstrate the performance of their termite bait products. The testing is also expected to address issues such as labeling structural protection claims/disclaimers and the use of baits in an integrated termite control program. During the meeting, the panel identified a number of guideline shortcomings, such as inflexibility, inadequate testing protocols, and unrealistic expectations.

As currently written, the guidelines require that small-scale field tests either determine the ability of the bait to protect a structure from termite damage (wooden blocks placed on concrete slabs) or determine the ability of a bait to suppress or eliminate a colony. The panel generally agreed that they preferred the latter of the two, but disagreed about how best to conduct the study.

Guidelines for large-scale testing were especially onerous. The guidelines call for a minimum of 500 wooden structures, with different goals for preventative and remedial treatments. For preventative treatments, the bait must completely prevent a structural infestation for a minimum of five years, and eliminate the foraging population within one meter of the structure. For remedial treatments, the bait must eliminate an existing termite infestation within 12 months following bait system application in 100 percent of the infested structure, and then remain termite-free for one year afterward. Panelists disagreed with many of these requirements - saying that the number of structures was much too high. A statistician on the panel stated that a more realistic range would be between 150 and 200. They also said a success rate of 100 percent was unrealistic. More realistic endpoints would be a three-year time frame

for preventative treatments and 90 percent elimination for the remedial treatments. At least one member stated that they did not believe in baits as a preventative treatment as a general rule, because baits do not form a physical barrier around a structure that can result in a termite-free zone. (*Chemical Regulation Reporter*, Vol. 26, No. 31).

## Pesticide News

- Recently, there has been a number of products advertised as mosquito traps. One type generates carbon dioxide to lure the mosquito and then sucks it into a bag. Other derivations use octenol as an attractant. The devices range from a few hundred to fifteen hundred dollars in cost. Gas and octenol must be replaced at various intervals. Researchers are currently investigating the efficacy of these units. However, one might want to keep in mind that there are numerous species of mosquito, and each of these varies in what host they bite, the time of day they feed, and how far they can fly. One of the species which is a primary biting pest for homeowners is the Asian tiger mosquito. This species is not attracted by carbon dioxide or octenol. At this point, no evidence exists that these traps can play a noticeable role in the decline of mosquito populations. For more information call Dr. Roxanne Rutledge at 772 778-7200 x 158. (IFAS/FMEL release, 6/13/02).
- The USDA has announced plans to reorganize its biotechnology regulatory functions, including creation of an Office of Biotechnology Regulatory Services. Twenty-five staff positions will be moved from Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - currently responsible for transgenic plant imports, interstate movement, and release into the environment - and 37 positions created to facilitate USDA's interaction with EPA and FDA. (CropLife America Spotlight, 6/28/02).

- Observing the 40th anniversary of Silent Spring, author Ronald Bailey wrote in a recent issue of Reason that "The great cancer scare launched by Rachel Carson and perpetuated by her believers ever since, should have been put to rest by the 1996 National Academy of Sciences report on carcinogens in human diets. That report concluded natural diet components may prove of greater concern than synthetic with respect to cancer risk." Bailey concluded that Carson may have been ignorant of facts at the time, "but after four decades in which tens of billions of dollars have been wasted chasing imaginary risks, her intellectual descendants don't have the same excuse."

Access at

<http://reason.com/rb/rb061202.shtml> .  
(CropLife America Spotlight, 6/28/02)

- Some people may be aware of the new herbicide Callisto® (mesotrione), and the potential interaction with certain organophosphate soil insecticides. The label states, "Severe corn injury may occur if Callisto® is applied postemergence to corn crops that were treated with Counter® or Lorsban®, which may result in corn crop yield loss." Spring trials conducted on a Michigan research farm demonstrated why this statement is included on the label. Severe injury was observed from the combination of Counter® (terbufos) in-furrow with Callisto® postemergence. Corn injury was less when Counter® was applied in a T-band, but was still significant. Temporary corn injury also occurred from Lorsban® (chlorpyrifos) T-band followed by Callisto® postemergence. However, Callisto® injury with Lorsban® was less than with Counter®. (Michigan Field Crop IPM Newsletter, Vol. 17, No. 10).