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Trac Software for Turfgrass: Record Keeping Made Easier

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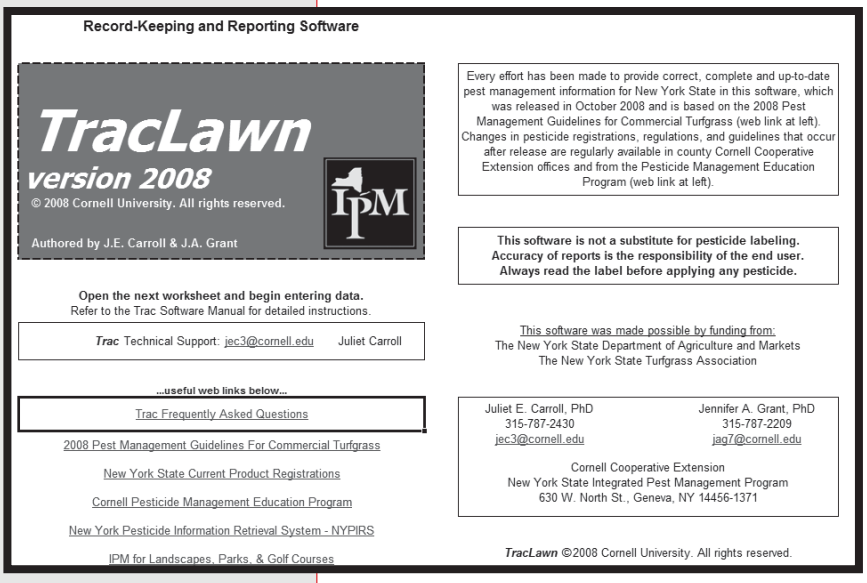
Trac software for turfgrass was released in November 2008. Some of you have tried it and love it, while in other shops it's still sitting on the shelf. And some of you still need to get a copy! In this article, I'll give you a view of what Trac software is and how it can help you. I'll also provide some pointers on getting started and customizing the files for your use—as well as underscoring some common pitfalls.

What is Trac Software?

Trac is easy to use Excel-based software, created to record annual pesticide and fertilizer applications. Four files are customized for the turfgrass industry: TracGolf, TracGrounds, TracSod and TracLawn. The files contain information on over 100 turfgrass pesticides registered in New York State, based on the Cornell Pest Management Guidelines. The user enters information on applications, locations and applicators, and Trac automatically generates pesticide report forms. All turfgrass files are currently distributed on a single CD.



What are the system and user requirements?

Trac requires Windows 98 (or above), or Mac OS 9 (or above), but will not run on the Vista operating system. The computer must have Microsoft Excel up to Office 2007 on a Windows operating system, or up to Office 2004 on a Macintosh. Trac will not run on Mac Office 2008. The user needs a basic knowledge of Excel, but novice users can obtain many tips from the Trac Software Manual contained on the CD.

How does Trac work?

Those familiar with working on an Excel spreadsheet will find Trac software easy to use. You simply "fill in the blanks" on data entry worksheets. One sheet asks for basic information, such as name and address of the business. Another sheet allows you to enter application information, such as the spray date and pesticide used, et cetera. The files were designed for New York's turfgrass industry, so there are advantages such as listings of many pesticides registered in NY that can be selected. When you select a pesticide trade name from the drop down list, the software automatically fills

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The less-often considered benefits of Trac software are more subtle. A concise tally of pesticide applications gets you thinking about where, when and why you are applying. Are there certain properties, or holes on a golf course, that are being treated more than others? Why are you using particular products? Were you applying more than you realized?

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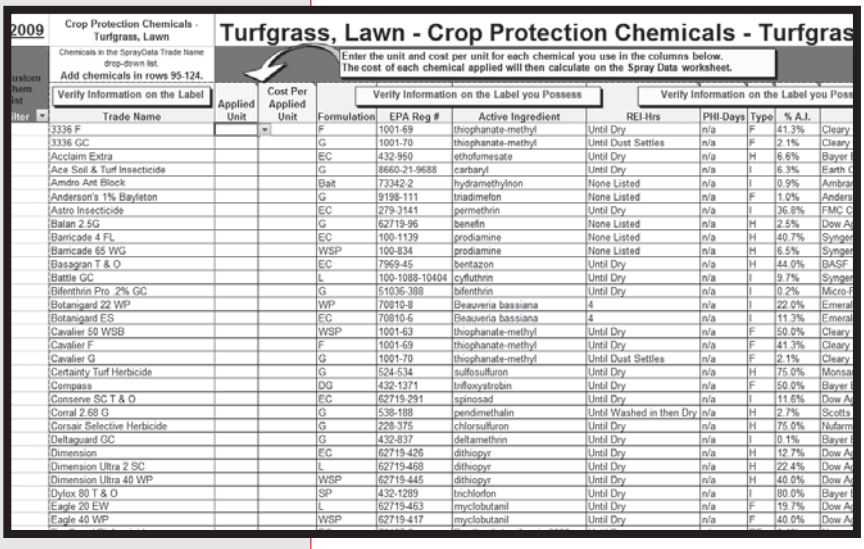
in the EPA registration number, REI (re-entry interval) and % active ingredient. If products you use are not on the list, you can enter them—just once! After your pesticides have been selected they appear as a drop down list when you are recording individual applications.

Drop down lists are created from much of the data entered: if you've listed 10 areas on a campus where you maintain turf, those ten areas will always show up in a drop down list. The four Trac for Turfgrass files also have exhaustive lists of diseases, insects and weeds of turf found in NY. Trac automatically fills in the DEC spray report forms from the data entry worksheets. Furthermore, the files are dynamic. If you change a practice, or add an area or a customer during the season—simply add it in, and the various worksheets will automatically be updated.

How can Trac help me?

The obvious and immediate benefits of using Trac software are that record keeping should be easier and more accurate. Drop down lists are provided for pesticides and pests, and other features that are common to many users—such as tee, greens and fairway designations in TracGolf. The software also generates drop down lists specific to your golf course, school or business. These lists save time in repetitive entries, and also prevent typing errors. Trac improves accuracy in reporting by feeding your application and site-specific information directly into the DEC applicator annual report form.

The less-often considered benefits of Trac software are more subtle. A concise tally of pesticide applications gets you thinking about where, when and why you are applying. Are there certain properties, or holes on a golf course, that are being treated more than others? Why are you using particular products? Were you applying more than you realized? More or less than last year? The Trac SprayData worksheet prompts you to enter your target pest and "decision support" (e.g. scouting report, historical records, etc.). We often get into habits—good or bad—when we manage turfgrass. Even listing the areas you typically treat, or "pest management units" can make you rethink your IPM program. Trac is a new tool that can help you examine, assess and compare your pest management inputs. Especially if your records have been hand-written up to this point, you'll find that data in Trac is much easier to summarize and compare.



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Chemicals in the SprayData Trade Name drop-down list. Add chemicals in rows 95-124.

Enter the unit and cost per unit for each chemical you use in the columns below. The cost of each chemical applied will then calculate on the Spray Data worksheet.

Verify Information on the Label			Verify Information on the Label you Possess							
Trade Name	Applied Unit	Cost Per Applied Unit	Formulation	EPA Reg #	Active Ingredient	REI-Hrs	PHI-Days	Type	% A.I.	
3336 F			F	1001-69	thiophanate-methyl	Until Dry	n/a	F	41.3%	Cleary
3336 GC			G	1001-70	thiophanate-methyl	Until Dust Settles	n/a	F	2.1%	Cleary
Acclaim Extra			EC	432-950	ethofumesate	Until Dry	n/a	H	6.6%	Bayer E
Ace Soil & Turf Insecticide			G	8660-21-9688	carbaryl	Until Dry	n/a	I	6.3%	Earth C
Amdro Ant Block			Bait	73342-2	hydramethylnon	None Listed	n/a	I	0.9%	Ambrar
Anderson's 1% Bayleton			G	9198-111	triadimefon	None Listed	n/a	F	1.0%	Anders
Astro Insecticide			EC	279-3141	permethrin	Until Dry	n/a	I	36.8%	FMC C
Balan 2.5G			G	62719-96	benefin	None Listed	n/a	H	2.5%	Dow Ag
Barricade 4 FL			EC	100-1139	prodiamine	None Listed	n/a	H	40.7%	Syngen
Barricade 65 WG			WSP	100-834	prodiamine	None Listed	n/a	H	6.5%	Syngen
Basagran T & O			EC	7969-45	bentazon	Until Dry	n/a	H	44.0%	BASF
Battle GC			L	100-1088-10404	cyfluthrin	Until Dry	n/a	I	9.7%	Syngen
Bifenthrin Pro .2% GC			G	51036-388	bifenthrin	Until Dry	n/a	I	0.2%	Micro-F
Botanigard 22 WP			WP	70810-8	Beauveria bassiana	4	n/a	I	22.0%	Emeral
Botanigard ES			EC	70810-6	Beauveria bassiana	4	n/a	I	11.3%	Emeral
Cavalier 50 WSB			WSP	1001-63	thiophanate-methyl	Until Dry	n/a	F	50.0%	Cleary
Cavalier F			F	1001-69	thiophanate-methyl	Until Dry	n/a	F	41.3%	Cleary
Cavalier G			G	1001-70	thiophanate-methyl	Until Dust Settles	n/a	F	2.1%	Cleary
Certainty Turf Herbicide			G	524-534	sulfosulfuron	Until Dry	n/a	H	75.0%	Monsar
Compass			DG	432-1371	trifloxystrobin	Until Dry	n/a	F	50.0%	Bayer E
Conserve SC T & O			EC	62719-291	spinosad	Until Dry	n/a	I	11.6%	Dow Ag
Corral 2 68 G			G	538-188	pendimethalin	Until Washed in then Dry	n/a	H	2.7%	Scotts
Corsair Selective Herbicide			G	228-375	chlorsulfuron	Until Dry	n/a	H	75.0%	Nufarm
Deltaguard GC			G	432-837	deltamethrin	Until Dry	n/a	I	0.1%	Bayer E
Dimension			EC	62719-426	dithiopyr	Until Dry	n/a	H	12.7%	Dow Ag
Dimension Ultra 2 SC			L	62719-468	dithiopyr	Until Dry	n/a	H	22.4%	Dow Ag
Dimension Ultra 40 WP			WSP	62719-445	dithiopyr	Until Dry	n/a	H	40.0%	Dow Ag
Dylox 80 T & O			SP	432-1289	trichlorfon	Until Dry	n/a	I	80.0%	Bayer E
Eagle 20 EW			L	62719-463	myclobutanil	Until Dry	n/a	F	19.7%	Dow Ag
Eagle 40 WP			WSP	62719-417	myclobutanil	Until Dry	n/a	F	40.0%	Dow Ag

Common Problems

Most of our tech support phone calls and emails for Trac for Turfgrass have come in two categories: trouble with

Excel basics, and inability to type into the pesticide applicator report form. If you are completely unfamiliar with using Microsoft Excel, it will take you a little longer to get comfortable using Trac. However, the user's manual has many good tips and shortcuts for navigating Excel. More experienced users can also find advanced tips for customizing worksheets and output in the manual. The FAQ, Excel Shortcuts and Trac Tips on our website may also be useful, http://nysipm.cornell.edu/trac/. For the more personal touch, you may be able to get help from your bookkeeper or family member—Microsoft Excel is a commonly used application.

Secondly, we've received several calls from frustrated users saying, "I'm trying to type in the pesticide applicator report, but the cells are protected. Would you please give me the password"? The answer is that the cells are protected, because you are not supposed to be typing there. It's important to understand that the pesticide applicator report is an output form - it is based on all the data entered on other worksheets. If you override these cells, you undermine the whole premise of Trac. Sure, we could give you a blank form to type into—but that's no better than filling the form out by hand.

Most of the worksheets are protected, so that you don't inadvertently ruin the formulas and macros. However, you can usually unprotect them without a password. Sometimes this is useful for advanced tasks such as customized filtering and sorting. There are specific instructions for many of these functions in the user's manual and on the web site. The bottom line is, if it's password protected, leave it alone. If it's a protected worksheet, proceed with caution and be sure you have a backup.

Why was Trac developed?

Trac software was originally developed by the NYS IPM Fruit Coordinator, Juliet Carroll, to help fruit growers face the demand for traceability of their products and a myriad of reporting requirements to processors and other buyers of those crops. Although turfgrass managers face different demands than food producers—the record keeping focus of Trac was highly adaptable to the turfgrass industry. Dr. Carroll, in collaboration with Jennifer Grant of the NYS IPM Program, created four new files customized for Golf, Lawn Care, Grounds management and Sod production. Development was funded by the New York State Turfgrass Association and the New York State IPM Program.

How can I get a copy of Trac Software for Turfgrass?

NYSTA members receive a complimentary copy as a member benefit.

For additional copies, go to the NYS IPM Program web site's Trac page, http://nysipm.cornell.edu/trac/ and click on "Obtain Trac Software for Turf". All four files, TracGolf, TracLawn, TracGrounds and TracSod, as well as the user's manual, are contained on one CD. It can be obtained for a $25 shipping and handling fee.

Jennifer Grant, Ph.D.

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