

Scotts' GMO turfgrass approved as USDA concludes no risk review necessary for 'gene gun' modifications

A new GMO variety of tall fescue turfgrass that's resistant to glyphosate herbicides has been cleared for cultivation by USDA without conducting an environmental review of the new crop.

The Scotts Miracle-Gro company developed the glyphosate-resistant turfgrass variety with genes from other plants through a process known as "biolistics," in which a "gene gun" essentially shoots DNA-coated metal particles into the plant cell.

Because the method does not involve the use of a plant pest for gene transfer, the USDA has no authority to regulate the tall fescue, according to a document recently released by the agency.

Controversial biotech crops that are also resistant to glyphosate herbicides — such as "Roundup Ready" alfalfa and sugar beets — were made using a soil pathogen, which required USDA to study the plants before deregulating them.

Over the past four years the company has persuaded the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service that several biotech varieties of Kentucky bluegrass and St. Augustinegrass did not come under its regulatory jurisdiction.

"They're able to get around APHIS' authority with their new techniques," Carol Mallory-Smith, a weed science professor at Oregon State University.

Some in the grass seed industry say the company's activities have sparked concerns.

Resistance to glyphosate — while potentially convenient for homeowners — can turn grasses into troublesome weeds for farmers.

Read full, original article: [USDA clears GMO tall fescue](#)