

2023

Jim Kuhn Leadership Award
California Alfalfa & Forage Association,
Representing the Alfalfa and Forage Growers of California

Jesse Richardson

*Field Scientist and North America Technical Education Leader,
Corteva Agriscience*



The California Alfalfa & Forage Association (CAFA) is very pleased to award the 2023 Jim Kuhn Leadership Award to Dr. Jesse Richardson, recognize 37 years of tremendous contributions to the alfalfa industry, especially in the area of improved pest management and his continued service to the California Alfalfa & Forage Association.

The Jim Kuhn Leadership Award is presented to a person or organization for their lasting contributions to the California alfalfa industry. The award was established in 2005 when Jim Kuhn, an industry icon and forage innovator, was killed in a vehicle accident near his ranch in El Centro, CA. Nominees are judged on their knowledge of alfalfa, record of leadership, and the extent and depth of their contributions to the California alfalfa industry and to rural communities.

Dr. Richardson has worked on pest management issues with alfalfa over a long career spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, and given his in-depth knowledge of alfalfa, he rapidly became the go-to person on pest management options for this crop, both within industry and outside.

Hired as a field scientist by Dow Chemical USA in 1986, he conducted field research and providing technical services in California and Arizona over 37 years with the same company. This company has changed names repeatedly, from Dow Chemical to DowElanco, Dow AgroSciences, and currently Corteva Agriscience.

Some of his first projects included developing new chlorpyrifos formulations for alfalfa and cotton, specifically formulated for low desert environments. These were eventually registered as Lock-On insecticide. This early work addressed issues of rain-fastness, sprinkler chemigation and impact of post-application wind on Lorsban efficacy.

Some key weed issues have been a challenge for alfalfa growers for many years. Dr. Richardson worked closely with UCCE Farm Advisor Steve Orloff and PCA Tim Hayes to come up with solutions for difficult to control grasses and dodder. Their work helped to fine-tune Treflan TR-10 application parameters for grass weed and dodder control in alfalfa among other options.

He has worked on a wide range of products of relevance to alfalfa, including Proaxis insecticide (pyrethroid) for control of chewing and sucking insects in alfalfa, and Intrepid insecticide for

selective control of the worm complex in alfalfa. In recent years, he has developed use patterns for ‘Transform’ insecticide for control of aphids, Lygus and plant hoppers in alfalfa. This is presently the top-selling product for aphids and Lygus in alfalfa in states outside of California (not yet registered in California). A key issue with the utilization of these pesticides is to accomplish efficacy while preserving natural enemies and pollinators.

His in-depth knowledge enabled Dr. Richardson to be of critical help in navigating the complex regulatory environment for the use of pesticides, nationally and state-wide. He was North America Chlorpyrifos Technical Expert for Dow AgroSciences from 2011 to 2017, working closely with the EPA and state regulators. He answered many technical questions and made multiple trips to Washington D.C. to work with regulators.

Upon the request of the University of California IPM group and the CA Department of Pesticide Regulation, he was invited to represent CAFA on the alfalfa committee for [Identifying and Managing Critical Uses of Chlorpyrifos 2013-2014](#) (published by University of California ANR, 2014). This study was important, since often members of the general public (and policy makers) do not understand the critical uses of pesticides in ag systems, and the consequences of losing ‘tools’ in crop production for whole-system Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Dr. Richardson has not been afraid to take off his ‘company’ hat and put on his ‘educator’ hat. He has been an invited speaker at the California, Western, and World alfalfa symposia, presenting on topics of pesticide resistance management and the pesticide development process. He is a regularly invited speaker at PCA and grower meetings on topics of agronomic forensic investigations, pesticide resistance management, routes of insecticide activity in crops, and the pesticide development process. He is presently an adjunct professor at California State University, Fresno guest lecturing for courses intended to prepare future PCAs.

His leadership capabilities are illustrated in many ways. He was invited to serve on the CAFA board as an industry representative in 1998, one year after it was formed and has been active on the board for 25 years. He is also the past president of Western Society of Weed Science (2009-2010) and the California Weed Science Society (1995-1996).

Dr. Richardson received his BS (1980) and MS (1982) from Arizona State University, and PhD in Agronomy from Washington State University (1985). He has nine daughters and 19 grandchildren, is passionate about travel and the outdoors, and loves studying American and European history.

Dr. Richardson says, “Alfalfa is my all-time favorite crop on which to conduct field research!”

It is with great pleasure that we award Jesse Richardson the Jim Kuhn Leadership Award for 2023.

California Alfalfa & Forage Association

Jim Kuhn Leadership Award Recipients

(Complete biographies of these Kuhn Award recipients can be found at:
<https://www.calhay.org/jim-kuhn-award.html>)

- 2005 – Jim Kuhn, Farmer, Seeley, CA (awarded posthumously)
- 2006 – Dr. Vern Marble, UC Cooperative Extension Alfalfa Specialist, UC Davis, CA
- 2007 – Mick Canevari, UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, Stockton, CA
- 2008 – Mel Coelho, Director, San Joaquin Valley Hay Growers Association, Tracy, CA
- 2009 – Tim Hays, Pest Control Advisor, Lancaster, CA
- 2010 – Seth Hoyt, ‘The Hoyt Report’, Ione, CA
- 2011 – Steve Orloff, UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, Yreka, CA
- 2012 – Joe Machado, Sales Leader, America’s Alfalfa, Los Banos, CA
- 2013 – Harry Cline, Editor, Western Farm Press, Fresno, CA
- 2014 – Dr. Larry Teuber, Alfalfa Breeder, UC Davis, CA (awarded posthumously)
- 2015 – Dr. Mark McCaslin, President, FGI International, Minneapolis, MN
- 2016 – Tom Ellis, Farmer, Grimes, CA
- 2017 – Dr. Daniel H. Putnam, UC Cooperative Extension Forage Specialist, UC Davis, CA
- 2018 – Duane Chamberlain, Yolo County Farmer
- 2019 – Philip Bowles, Merced County Farmers, Los Banos, CA
- 2021 – Rick Staas, San Joaquin Valley Haygrowers Association, Tracy, CA
- 2022 – John Szczespanski, National Hay Association-US Forage Export Council
- 2023 – Dr. Jesse Richardson, Scientist, Corteva Agriscience