Early diagnosis is essential for fusarium patch control, says the STRI's Kate York

Fusarium patch is the most damaging and disfiguring fungal disease to attack fine turf in the UK.

Good management techniques can go a long way towards minimising the effect of this disease but no system can guarantee fusarium-free greens, according to Kate York, plant pathologist at the Sports Turf Research Institute, Bingley.

"The key to minimising fusarium patch damage is accurate diagnosis of the first symptoms of the disease. Almost all Britain's golf courses have a fusarium patch problem to some extent, so every greenkeeper should be on the lookout for early signs, especially between October and March when the fungus is most active," she says.

"Fusarium patch starts off as small orangey-brown circles of about 5cm in diameter. If left untreated once observed, the disease can rapidly spread in a very short period of time. These small patches increase in size and coalesce, eventually growing into larger dark-edged circles with straw-coloured centres which, when the disease is active, are slimy to the touch. This is the face of fusarium that all greenkeepers will recognise.

"Once the disease has become so firmly established that grass at the centre of each patch is dead, new spores are being released. These spores can be spread across the affected area causing a rapid rise in disease levels. Immediate fungicide treatment at this stage is imperative."

The fungus causing these problems is called Microdochium nivale. It is present in turf all year round, thriving particularly in cool, humid conditions. Although fusarium patch is generally considered to be a winter disease, it can occur throughout the year if environmental conditions are suitable.

"Wet greens with a high level of Poa annua and a history of fusarium patch are most at risk every year," says Kate.

"To minimise the spread of fusarium patch greenkeepers should nominate one or two more susceptible greens and use them as 'indicator' greens. Shaded or sheltered areas, where the turf surface stays wetter for longer, are ideal for this purpose.

"As a general rule, if fusarium symptoms are spotted on the 'indicator' greens, the disease is likely to appear on others within two weeks if there is no significant change in weather conditions. Using these greens as a guide will allow fungicide applications to be correctly timed, containing the problem and minimising turf damage."

"To maintain good control after the initial treatment, greens should be regularly monitored and repeat fungicide treatments should be applied as and when necessary."

If early action is not taken, the price can be high. The disease is extremely vigorous and spreads rapidly. If fusarium patch is allowed to establish itself, scars will be left on the turf surface and will cause further problems.
Treated seed is an effective way of keeping fungal attacks at bay

Greenkeepers using perennial ryegrasses are being advised to buy treated seed to ward off fungal attack.

Geoff Taylor, technical officer at Johnsons Seeds, warns that the arrival of the autumn with its warm moist soils, ideal for speedy germination, can often be interspersed with cold nights and heavy dews – predisposing factors for attacks by fungal disease on emerging grass seedlings. The seedbed if poorly prepared, especially when lying too wet (or even too dry), is the cradle for numerous fungal pathogens.

Renovation of thin turf is a prime case for treated seed. Serious losses can occur from the earliest stages – with attacks on ungerminated seeds through the phases of pre- and post-seedling emergence.

Whilst recommended seed rates are designed to allow for these and other causes of seedling mortality, treatments such as Apron T treatment with its potent duo of thiabendazole and propamocarb provide a relatively economical extra assurance of protection against severe seedling losses. New sowings can be devastated by the well known ‘damping-off’ disease which involves a complex of fungi – the two main culprits being fusarium and pythium, respectively associated with excessive dryness and wetness.

“Rapid and even seed development is a prime requirement in autumn to ensure that a new or renovated sward is well established before conditions deteriorate and growth ceases,” says Mr Taylor. “Delayed sowings, therefore, are another obvious instance where seed treatment is an essential precaution.”

“Faced with the risk of fungal disease, we believe treated seed is a prudent assurance policy that avoids the significant losses of time and money associated with sub-optimal sowing conditions.”

For further details call Geoff Taylor on 0205 365051.
Former welder heralds start of greenkeeping career with an award

Former steelworks welder Carl Price, pictured, has made an award-winning start to his new career as a greenkeeper.

Carl, who lives in Shotton, has just been presented with the 'Hortiplay' award for excellent achievement at the Welsh College of Horticulture in Northop, Clwyd.

He worked at the new Northop Country Park Golf Club during his training and has now been permanently recruited as an assistant greenkeeper. This marks the successful end of a country-wide trawl for work.

After being made redundant from Shotton steelworks in the early '80s, Carl travelled all over the UK as a contract welder, but found it increasingly difficult to find work as the recession bit.

Eventually he returned home to North Wales and saw the greenkeeping course advertised in his local paper.

Carl was one of 11 students who undertook the NVQ Level 2 course at the Welsh College of Horticulture, supported by the Training and Enterprise Council for North East Wales.

Carl is one of a seven-strong greenkeeping team which looks after the 6,680 yards course at Northop Country Park, which is set within 247 acres of carefully tended parkland.

Noel Hynes, course manager, said: "We are delighted with Carl's success and have found him to be a very productive member of the team."

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Following a recent remark by BIGGA president Viscount Whitelaw that in years to come it may be difficult to keep the top greenkeepers in this country, Chris Boiling went to Holland to see what it's like for three Brits working abroad.

BILL GARNER

Bill Garner hasn't worked in the UK for ten years. After 16 years at Wilmslow (six as head greenkeeper), he became course manager at The Grange in Dublin. Then he saw a job advertised and in March 1988 became course manager at Hilversumsche, Holland's fourth oldest course.

When I met him, Bill and his staff were busy preparing the 18-hole wooded heathland course for the Dutch Open. He says his aim is to "make it the best course in Holland." He has no plans to return home yet: "The longer it goes on the harder it is to go back."

The grass is greener for greenkeepers on the other side of the North Sea. After a quick tour of three Dutch clubs maintained by Brits, it's easy to come to the conclusion that:

- Their maintenance facilities rank alongside the best clubs in Britain;
- Their machinery inventory would be the envy of most British greenkeepers; and
- They are treated better. They are treated as professionals by their employers and by club members, and are paid accordingly.

BIGGA's former education chairman, Huw Parry, the former course manager at Bristol and Clifton who accompanied me on the lightning tour of The Netherlands, agrees: "Their facilities are certainly much better. They seem to be regarded more – especially the expats – as professional people. They certainly have a way of life that is far better than in the UK, but they seem to be under less pressure at the same time. The standards are different so the pressures are different. The standards in the UK are much greater, generally. I think they've got a much better working environment. They seem to have the machinery to do the job, they seem to have the money to spend on fertiliser, seeds and top dressings.

"I think at the end of the day as long as they're producing a good product then the money is there for them, whereas back home many greenkeepers are fighting for everything they can get."

Budgets

At the 5859m par 72 Hilversumsche Golf Club Bill Garner says he has a budget but he gets what he wants. "The course comes first here. If I need a machine then it's planned." He even has his own Hydroject 3000 and two Verti-drains. He spends...
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COLIN FAIRLEY

Colin Fairley – pictured centre with his team – joined Vereniging Golfclub Almeerderhout six and a half years ago and helped with its extension in 1990. The club now has three loops of nine holes, a nine-hole par 3 course and driving range. Although it is situated below sea level on land won back from the ocean, the forest has a very natural look. With several water hazards and an extensive tree-planting scheme they are “working towards parkland”.

Colin, 36, was recommended for the job by the pro whom he had met while greenkeeping in Edinburgh. Colin started as an apprentice at Harburn and worked his way up to first assistant before becoming head greenkeeper at Uphall, where he stayed for six years.

about £80,000 on grass seed, sand and fertiliser.

Colin Fairley says he now spends more on servicing his machinery than he had in his budget at his previous clubs. “It’s a new club run by company managers who realise you get what you pay for,” he adds.

Adrian Simm says at his first club “machinery and money were no object”. He says he had £1m worth of machinery and spent £120,000 a year on grass seed and fertiliser (although you have to bear in mind tax is paid on seed and fertiliser).

Size of team

Bill Garner has seven staff to maintain his 18-hole course. Colin Fairley has a staff of nine looking after 27 holes and par 3 course.

We were shocked when Adrian Simm said the greenkeeping staff at Amsterdamse comprised three greenkeepers and the course manager. Then we found out their only responsibility is the 18 greens, aprons, bunkers, tees and the tee bankings. Everything else is contracted out. The contractor has about 50 employees and looks after several courses and parks. They cut the fairways, semi rough and rough and carry out other tasks such as verti-draining and overseeding. “It takes a lot of pressure off me,” says Adrian.

Bill adds: “The staff have been good to me. There were some difficulties in the beginning but you could get that going to Scotland.”

Greens committee

Hilversumsche has a greens committee of three who stay for five years. Bill Garner has had the same greens chairman for six years and he says, “He backs me all the way when it comes to machines.”

Colin works with five other people on his committee, each has his own function. They meet every six to eight weeks.

Amsterdamse has a greens committee of one whom Adrian sees for ten minutes every Monday morning with the general manager.

Life abroad

The course managers we met had a higher standard of living than many of their UK counterparts and their money was far superior, although it’s an expensive place to live. Health insurance is partic-
Where the grass is greener

AMSTERDAMSE

In 1990 the 60-year-old Amsterdamse Golf Club was forced to move to a new site when a new railway was built on nine holes. The remaining nine became the Amsterdam Old Course and a new course – with pennicross and pure sand greens – was built in Halfweg. A year and a half after being built they were condemned by club members, the STRI's Jeff Perris and Walter Wood, St Andrews' links superintendent. They agreed the greens would never meet the required standard. The main cause was the very high pH level which made the depth ranged from 20-60 cm and the almost missing upper humus bed.

A decision was made to start again – at a cost of £100,000. "But we had no choice," said club member and golf course architect Gerard Jol, who was commissioned to redesign the greens and direct the project.

His starting point with the new greens was more pin positions. He also made them smaller (from an average of 690 m² to 550 m²), "more interesting and challenging." The new greens were sewn on the wrong side of the road. The weather is similar to the UK, so there are more regulations concerning pesticides, the use of nitrogen and how much water can be used.

Adrian says the maintenance practices are very similar but "we've got more money to play with and full control of the budget."

Recommend it?
"It's a confidence booster – to be able to learn the language, drive on the wrong side of the road. When you can survive abroad you think 'Yeah, that's good'," says Bill.

Caser Paulussen, Colin's Dutch deputy, says: "Most Dutch people speak English so there is no problem with language."

Family life
Living abroad is easier for the greenkeeper because he's doing a job he enjoys. The key to success is how the wife and children adapt. "I think if my wife wasn't happy we'd go back, but she is happy. She's made some nice friends – Dutch and English," says Bill Garner who is married with three children – girls aged seven and four and a boy who is nearly two. He says his family have adapted well to life abroad. His children – two of whom were born in Holland – all speak "perfect" English and Dutch.

Adrian is also married with three children (aged eight, five and three) who are learning to speak Dutch.

Caser Paulussen, Colin's Dutch deputy, says: "Most Dutch people speak English so there is no problem with language."

The language
If the signs on the courses are anything to go by, there should be no language problems. The ground under repair' and 'next tee' signs were all in English.

Bill speaks Dutch, Adrian doesn't but he says all of his staff speak English. Colin speaks a little Dutch but says half his staff are British anyhow – "there's a shortage of qualified staff in The Netherlands," he says, so he has employed several Brits.

The work started in August 1992 and was finished two months later. Because the fairways were already sewn with fescue and bent grasses, good temporary greens were constructed on the fairway, so disruption to members was kept to a minimum while the new greens were built and grown-in.

The greens were open for play at the beginning of September 1993 with the mowing height kept to 8 mm. In October, two years after the greens were condemned and one year after the reconstruction started, the Netherland Golf Federation gave the club the 'A-status' it desired.
The new products that caught our eye at the 1994 Saltex show at Windsor Racecourse

Staffordshire company Turfmech Machinery Ltd has produced a frame that will enable one tractor to pull two seven-gang mowing units simultaneously. The Turfmech Accumulator 7/7 frame enables one man to mow 30ft (9.5m) in one pass. Turfmech tells us: "The Accumulator's frame geometry has been designed so that mowing performance both in a straight line and when turning at the end of a run remains at peak levels without risk of turf scuffing or the mowers interfering with an adjacent unit." To that end, all PTO drive shafts have wide angle joints to accommodate light turns and both they and the unit's oversize gearboxes are rated to match the recommended tractor power input of 40-60hp required to tow and operate the 14 individual mowing gangs.

Hydraulic pipework and quick release couplings are provided on the Accumulator's frame to enable lifting of the mowing units for transport. The frame is supported by four large castor wheels and has fully-floating arms to ensure precise, level mowing on undulating or uneven turf. All pivots are provided with greasing points. Price is £5,900.

Kubota unveiled a three-strong range of tractors in the 30-40hp class with features that include fully synchronised transmission, creep gear box and independent PTO. All three models in the Grandel range - the 35.1 (SAE) hp L3300, the 38.5 (SAE) hp L3600 and the 45.3 (SAE) hp L4200 - are powered by Kubota F-TVCS indirect diesel engines which, according to Kubota, "have been designed and developed to meet the world's toughest emission standards and engineered to combine high torque with low noise and vibration."

One of the main attractions of the new tractors for greenkeepers is the fully synchronised transmission. This should facilitate smoother gear changes, allowing the driver to change gear between any of the four speeds in the main transmission whilst on the move. In addition, the hydraulic shuttle allows direction changes between forward and reverse.

The transmission with a range of 16 forward and 16 reverse gears incorporates creep gear box as a standard feature on all three models and is ideal for operations such as verti-drain ing, planting and trenching.

A hydraulically activated independent PTO is common to the range and ensures that attachments can be easily and smoothly engaged and disengaged to reduce possible attachment damage. It also means that the operator can engage and disengage attachments either on the move or when static.

The Grandel tractor range also has a powerful lift capacity up to 1050 kgs. Prices, excluding VAT, are: L3300 - £13,350 fitted with rollover, £16,810 fitted with 'Q' cab; L3600 - £17,600 fitted with 'Q' cab; L4200 - £18,740 fitted with 'Q' cab.

Kubota's L4200

John Deere launched the 220 walk-behind greens mower which features a 3.7hp Kawasaki air-cooled engine and an 11-blade, 56cm (22in) reel for improved frequency of cut, at 4.9mm/cut. With an optional speed kit, this figure drops to only 3.9mm/cut. Standard cutting height with a 3mm bedknife is 3.2mm or, with the optional tournament bedknife, only 2.8mm. Attachments include a vertical cutter and rotary brush. Price is £2,611.

Also on show was a new Mauser cab that has more than 100 different types of rakes. Noting that "anybody who is interested in the world of rakes must be aware of Rake 'N'Lift & Co from Nottingham," the firm states that its Liquid Sand Rake and Squeegee Rake are manufactured in aluminium and have detachable rubber and plastic blades.

Nottingham-based Rake 'N' Lift & Co now has more than 100 different types of rakes. There are rakes that look more like shovels with teeth and there are plastic bunker rakes that go by the name of Parthenon and The Zeus.

For courses where vandalism and theft is a big problem Rake 'N' Lift have developed the Caddy Bunker Rake which golfers can take round in their golf bags. There are also rakes for removing water off greens. The Liquid-sand Rake and Squeegee Rake are manufactured in aluminium and have detachable rubber and plastic blades.
Dennis displayed its new FT610. With a 24in cut, this machine features an interchangeable cassette system and full range of cassette heads. A total of nine different cassette options are available, so you can cut, comb, scarify, de-thatch, brush, roll, sorrel roll and spike with this machine. Other accessories include a non-powered transport carrier and backlapping kit for use on the removed cylinder cassette. Also new is a verti-cutter system that fits into the shell of Dennis’ 36 and 90in Premier mowers.

Toro’s leading greens mower, the Greensmaster 3100, is now available in a three-wheel drive model, the 3100-3WD. Toro sales manager David Cole told us: “The three-wheel drive feature allows operators to reach and mow very difficult areas where additional traction is required to get the job done, such as sloped or stepped greens or steeply elevated tees.” He added that the Greensmaster 3100-3WD will especially benefit the many newer golf courses which frequently feature elevated greens or very hilly areas.

Toro also introduced a more powerful replacement for the company’s leading lightweight fairway mower and a smaller version of the high capacity Fairway Aerator, for use with smaller tractors. The Reelmaster 5300-D replaces the RM 5100-D and comes with a 32hp Mitsubishi S3L engine, a larger radiator to cool this three-cylinder, 1318cc diesel engine, larger hydraulic reed motors, and larger hydraulic pump. The HC4000 is a mid-sized aerator which can be used with tractors of 25-45hp.

Rolawn’s new Minster greens turf, officially launched at the show, has already been laid at Wentworth. “The cultivars in the new turf exactly match those on our new greens,” says course manager Chris Kennedy. The fine textured turf comprises 40% Bargreen (chewings fescue), 40% Barcrown (slender creeping red fescue) and 20% Bardot (browntop bent). The turf has been installed on the club’s new two-tier putting green in front of the new clubhouse.

Pro-Seed Equipment Ltd showed the new Prosweep which has been designed and developed to brush topdressing into the base of the sward quickly, to stripe fairways, and to sweep light leaves and rubbish into rows for speedy collection.

The £17,000 Ransomes E-Plex, the world’s first all-electric triple greens mower which we featured last issue, attracted a great deal of interest. Greenkeepers from several top clubs were seen powing over the machine which has no engine and no hydraulic system.

Zeneca Professional Products, formerly ICI Professional Products, celebrated its name change by launching two new publications, a product manual and a product label manual, and two new products: Cleanrun, a feed and weed mini granular conventional fertiliser with an NPK analysis of 9:7:7, and a non-residual systemic herbicide called Touchdown LA for control of annual and perennial grass and broad-leaved weeds in non-crop areas.

Claymore Grass Machinery introduced the Columbia Parcar range of golf cars, people movers and utility vehicles. There is a choice of either 3.2hp electric or 8hp two-stroke petrol models. Both have continuous variable transmission, which eliminates a gearbox. For strength, all the units are of tubular frame construction, and the dual coil springs and shock absorbers help provide a smooth ride. A camber adjustment system keeps the front wheels flat on the ground to reduce turf compaction or the formation of ruts. To reduce noise, the petrol powered version has foam-lined engine compartment and wheel-wells, plus a tuned exhaust system. In addition, the engine has anti-vibration mountings. A feature of the Columbia Utility truck is that the shell and frame components are manufactured separately to reduce replacement costs if there is an accident.

Dixon & Holliday Ltd says its new Alpina VIP42 knapsack brushcutter is designed for the professional user who requires a machine which can be operated for extended periods on power demanding operations. Powered by a 41cc two-stroke motor which is made by Alpina themselves, the unit is said to have excellent torque back-up which allows it to be operated at well below maximum revs. The power unit, which is carried on the operator’s back in a well padded frame with wide straps, weighs under 7kgs (151bs). The straps have a quick release clip for ease of putting on and taking off. A 1.5 litre (2.7 pint) fuel tank extends working time, and the captive cap ensures that it cannot be mislaid. A diaphragm carburettor, priming bulb and solid state ignition are designed to ensure easy and reliable starting. The machine is supplied with a 2-line trimmer head and a slasher blade with guard as standard plus tool kit and flexible shaft lubricant.

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Michael Bird takes a positive view

Easy on the Budget

Altrac wheel remover provides effortless removal and refitting of tractor tyres by one person

Cordless tools have made a great contribution to the ease and speed of carrying out repairs and maintenance to course machinery and equipment.

Claimed to produce up to 25 per cent more power than other cordless drills is the UK designed and manufactured Combi from Elu Power Tools, combining a percussion drill and screwdriver in one compact unit.

Fitted with a keyless 10mm chuck, the current top of the range model is the 235 watt SBA55K, equipped with a 12 volt power pack and 14 torque control speed settings. For ease and economy of maintenance, the drill has replaceable brushes and a fan-cooled motor.

Included in the kit box are a one hour fast recharger, two batteries and a spanner to interchange the chuck and screwdriver bit.

An alternative to the use of electricity, whether cordless or through a lead, is air. Both portable and fixed compressors are finding increasing favour in many workshops as a safe, convenient and effective means of powering tools and other equipment.

One of the largest ranges of air tools can be found in the Spaldings catalogue. A number of complete kits are available comprising either petrol-powered, single or three phase fixed and portable compressors complete with a host of air tools and accessories designed for every conceivable workshop task.

Items such as impact wrenches, angle grinders, ratchets, socket sets, tyre gauges and grease guns can all be purchased individually, as required.

Need to hold the work secure? The Elu Superjaws portable workbench and vice weighs just 44lb (20kg) and can be set up in less than 30 seconds. It has foot pedal cooling motor. An alternative to the use of electricity, whether cordless or through a lead, is air. Both portable and fixed compressors are finding increasing favour in many workshops as a safe, convenient and effective means of powering tools and other equipment.

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Items such as impact wrenches, angle grinders, ratchets, socket sets, tyre gauges and grease guns can all be purchased individually, as required.

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