



Dr. Bryan Unruh, IFAS Extension Specialist at the West Florida Research & Education Center in Milton presented an update on his research into Methyl Bromide alternatives at the USGA Regional Conferences this year.

Photo by Joel Jackson

predation accounts for 300 million bird deaths a year. Gillihan has authored a book titled *Bird Conservation on Golf Courses: A Design and Maintenance Manual*.

The book is available from Ann Arbor Press, 800-487-2323. It makes a great companion to Ron Dodson's book, *Managing Wildlife Habitat on Golf Courses*, also available from Ann Arbor Press.

•Methyl bromide and ultradwarf updates - Dr. Bryan Unruh, assistant professor UF/IFAS extension specialist told the audience that while a couple of products hold out some hope for being used as a fumigant, nothing has come along yet that matches methyl bromide's effectiveness.

He also reported that California representative Richard Pombo has introduced bill H.R. 4215 to try to delay the ban on MeBr until 2010 to give scientists more time to develop a viable alternative.

Until something is found, MeBr production will decrease and product will become more expensive as we head toward the current ban date of 2005.

Drought Outlook Worse Than 'Severe'

The winter, spring, and early summer are the normal dry season in Florida. However, since late fall of 1999, a large portion of the state has not received any significant rainfall. A recent assessment published by the Climate Prediction Center has more than two-thirds of the state rated as being in a D2+ condition. D2 is the designation for a severe drought condition and the + indicates that the forecast calls for further intensification.

With day and night temperatures building, water requirements of turfgrasses also are increasing quickly. The net result experienced at a large number of courses around the state is growing problems maintaining a uniform green turf cover.

The base bermudagrass turf cover of Florida golf courses is considered to have excellent drought resistance. Bermudagrass is able to survive prolonged dry periods by going into a dormant stage, and then breaking dormancy when adequate soil moisture redevelops. As the bermudagrass enters into dormancy, it quickly loses its green color, but an acceptable playing surface still can be maintained.

Of greater concern at this point is completing the transition process out of winter overseeding cover. With hot daytime temperatures, any remaining overseeding material will quickly burn out. If the base bermuda is under drought stress, recovery will be prolonged.

The following is a review of some basic agronomic principles about managing grass during a drought.

1. Control traffic. Heavy traffic on grass under wilt/drought stress can cause permanent damage. Restrict traffic to paths, minimize traffic on roughs to the extent possible, do not allow crossover or the "90 degree rule," and even encourage walking.

2. Raise mowing heights and mow less often. After all, the grass should be growing slower.

3. Use plant growth regulators. Where

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appropriate, apply or continue using growth-regulating chemicals. These products can reduce water use rates by as much as 30 percent.

4. Pest management. On a positive note, insect (mole cricket) and disease activity is reduced.

5. Fertility. Defer fertilizer applications, especially granular, readily available nitrogen materials, until the weather moderates. Guard against stimulating too much growth. Sprayable forms of fertilizers can be beneficial when applied in a timely fashion. Maintaining adequate potassium is helpful for increasing stress tolerance.

6. Irrigation water quality. Regardless of the source, it would be advisable to check the irrigation water for sodium/salt build-up. In several locations, salt intrusion is a growing concern.

7. Renovation/Reconstruction. Rethink renovation or reconstruction projects. In general, do not disturb the turf unless you have the ability to irrigate these areas. Be patient, wait for better weather, and monitor district and local regulations covering renovation and turf establishment.

Remember that all golf courses represent the turfgrass industry and the game of golf. Respect irrigation regulations and requests for voluntary conservation. While individual conditions vary, we are in a serious drought, and unfortunately no relief is in sight. Hopefully, these points will help golf courses manage their turfgrass through a difficult period. If any specific questions arise, feel free to call our office at 561-546-2620. Good luck and let's pray for rain.

JOHN FOY
Director, Florida Region