Seed firms: Gov't cost us $1M

BY MARK LESLIE

Not satisfied with the mere "regrets" of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a snafu that cost his company $200,000, Sonny Pennington of Pennington Enterprises Inc. is on the verge of suing the USDA.

Pennington's Madison, Ga., firm is one of seven seed companies that absorbed a total $1 million loss when 2 million pounds of tall fescue seed imported from Argentina were found to contain a noxious weed, serrated tussock, and the seed was ordered recalled.

Pennington says he will decide by early August whether he would sue the government, but first he would seek an audience with Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter.

"We're attempting to go through Congress rather than lawyers," Pennington said. "Congressmen work cheaper than lawyers.

"My attorney says that to sue government it's going to cost $200,000 in attorney fees. I can sue and possibly win $250,000 and it will cost me $200,000. That'd be 10 cents for every dollar, and it appears we probably will have to—we'll sue for loss of reputation, loss of business."

An irate Greg Fennels of Olson Fennels Seed in Oregon, which also absorbed a

Possible cure found for cricket

BY LARRY KIEFFER

After four years of testing in pastureland by researchers with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, "the most promising biological control agent for mole crickets we have ever had" is ready for field trials at 20 Florida golf courses.

"Everything looks extremely promising as far as finally having something we can brag about," said Bob Rehberg, chairman of the Florida Turfgrass Association's research awards committee.

What Rehberg and the FTGA are bragging about is a Uruguay nematode that carries a bacterium "at least four times more virulent on the mole cricket than some of the other materials that have been pulled in from commercial organizations."

The microscopic nematode crawls in the mole cricket's mouth, infects it with the lethal bacteria, and then crawls out before the insect dies "within one to several days."

(The article continues on page 15.)
Amick suggests 18 ways to save on course

Golf course architect William Amick of Daytona Beach, Fla., lists 18 ways to save money building a course.

Amick, a member of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, suggests that a developer:

1) Lease land for a course on a long-term basis from a government agency, work in conjunction with a private land owner, or receive the land free from a developer who wants fairway frontage without operating a golf course. "Any of these methods will substantially reduce start-up costs," Amick says. "Developers should seriously consider giving enough land to an individual or group to build and operate a course. Government agencies have to contend with high interest payments and land costs. And "if you charge a nickel more for a cup of coffee, the public will not communicate with you咫尺 you're not going to get that land."

2) Schedule construction to take the shortest possible time and meet the ideal planting dates. Planting is the most expensive hazards.

3) Consider building an executive or par 3 course to save land, reduce construction costs, and make maintenance dollars go further. "These types of courses can fit the playing abilities of a large portion of America's golfers," Amick says. "This can mean a middle- and high-handicap golfers, occasional golfers, people with a limited amount of playing time, and those who want to sharpen their iron play or short game."

4) If housing will surround the course, have the golf course architect design it in complete coordination with a site planner.

5) Build a moderate rather than over-clubhouse course — one to fit the needs of the facility — and a few other recreational facilities will permit building golf fees lower, Amick says.

6) Construct as many small tees, fairways, and greens as possible, "which will be fair to golfers and handle traffic," he says.

7) Use low-profile tees, mounds, and bunkers. "This will decrease costly earth moving and, if done properly, can be attractive," he says.

8) Make sure that the irrigation system is a big-dollar item — is planned and installed properly.

9) Don't clear, plant or maintain parts of the rough away from regular play. Leave these areas natural.

10) Add some of the less essential features later, after the course is open and revenue has started coming in. Such features might be car paths, tree planting, and some of the sand traps.

Builders' boom

Continued from page 1

Not long ago a man who has operated several public golf courses for decades said only a municipal course could be built today and make money because private individuals have to contend with high interest payments and land costs. And "if you charge a nickel more for a cup of coffee, the public will not communicate with you咫尺 you're not going to get that land."

"We're seeing more and more clients interested in this type of facility... Jones Creek (Golf Course, designed by Rees Jones) in Augusta, Ga. operates on an upscale public course basis and is a wonderful and successful operation.

"Still, Rossi warns would-be developers: Many variables decide whether a course will be a success.

Location, he said, is critical. "Are you going to have a 12-month season or a nine-month season?" he asked. "Obviously, in the South you have a better chance of making it... That is also why so many ski areas are adding golf courses, so they will have a source of income the year round."

"You must also consider the weather," Rossi said. "In Hawaii they can stay open every day of the year. But in some of the country how many months can people play?"

This is also a reason so many ski areas are building golf courses — to be able to make money 12 months a year to pay the bills. Vital to the course is the water availability, if it is in an area people want to visit, and how many other courses and golfers are in the vicinity.

"If the closer you get to a city, the more expensive the land is to buy," Rossi said. "unless you're buying a landfill or condemned land" — and that, too, is being done today. In fact, some municipalities are building courses on their old landfills.

Indeed, Joe Jemsek, the dean of golf in Chicago, operating eight courses including the famous Cog Hill and Diane Meadow, insists that unless a builder has the land and doesn't have to borrow millions, "municipalities is the only way you can build a golf course.

"The municipalities pay for it and they get it from the taxpayers; they've got the land and it's for the good of everybody. It's the wave of the future," he said.

Yet Rossi said, "A lot of paperwork is being done but I don't see any deluge of munis — nor of daily-fee courses. Most are real-estate or resort courses."

"Look at the many courses being built in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, but we're not besieged with munis."

According to the National Golf Foundation reports, of the 241 courses being planned or under construction, 24 are municipal, 51 are private and the other 14 are undecided.

Whatever the type course, that translates into hundreds of millions of dollars being spend on courses, a lot of work for builders and thousands of new jobs for superintendents, club managers, pros and their staffs.

And when looking at NDF figures claiming the need for a new golf course a day for the next 20 years, Dye said, "I don't know of any industry that can double its volume overnight. We may never reach the point where we've saturated the market over building, and that's pretty unbelievable."
Northern New England: Surviving in shorter seasons

BY VERN PUTNEY

Northern New England is looked upon by much of the nation as a superb summer vacation spot, and the shoreline, forests and mountains aren't the only attractions. Golf course developers are thriving in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine.

New Hampshire lists 20 courses under development or in the planning stage. Maine numbers 14, Massachusetts 13. Developers' knowledge of area conditions and a not-too-restrictive hand by state agencies are keys to the expansion. Developers know that courses in these states will be playable from eight months to year-round. They have found that gloves (not gold) may be necessary in late November, and an early snowstorm may sideline even the most hardy, but the season is surprisingly long.

This means steady club revenue in front green fees and car rentals. Massachusetts (particularly Cape Cod) can have a near year-round season. Southern Maine can count on an April 15-Nov. 15 season, frequently with a week's bonus on either end. New Hampshire can squeeze in a bit more play. It's no wonder, then, that New England’s bedrock is ground for solid financial footing. Yet, financial success does not hinge on receipts from green fees and car rentals, but on business done before a shoveled earth has been turned.

That business is coupling real estate with golf courses. It has been a rewarding marriage. Around 90 percent of golf course-residential division does is linked to real-estate development. J.J. Cohen, president of a Littleton, Mass., construction and development company, said, "The golf gold in New Hampshire. He estimates his Blueberry Hill project in New Ipswich, begun in October 1987 and earmarked for opening in the fall of 1990, will realize a profit of some $50 million over the next 15 years.

That figure won't be strictly golf proceeds, of course. In addition to a championship 18-hole layout, Blueberry Hill will encompass luxury condominiums and such plush recreational facilities as an equestrian center and state-of-the-art health club.

The enticing melding of tournament-type country club course and real estate that attracts well-to-do members is evident at Falmouth (Maine) Country Club, a creation of architects Geoffrey S. Cornish and Brian Silva, which opened last fall.

David Bateman, vice president of Dictor Associates which developed Falmouth CC, noted: "We broke even in the construction of the golf course and the clubhouse. The big plus is the real estate around the course. We have 22 single-family lots for an average of $110,000—a total of about 13.4 million. Subtract $6 million in land and construction costs and Dictor realized a gross profit of up to $74 million.

Blueberry Hill and Falmouth figures must be considered fantastic in conservative country where green fees don't approach the $100 charged at some courses.

Indeed, residential freeway frontage is second only to waterfront frontage, offices, other forms of recreation, industrial parks, etc., are more integrated into golf courses.

The British viewpoint was "Trade Follows The Flag." The golf industry says, "Industry Follows Recreation."

It is not uncommon for companies to choose a site because of fine golf courses in a certain area. More private courses than ever have waiting lists. Some make applicants pay just to be on the list. Slightly, outside the Sun Belt, the majority who buy freeway lots are nongolfers. Yet they still want a fine golf course. West, for example, has a 1,033-acre master-planned project being developed by Landmark Land Co., Inc., about 40 miles east of Los Angeles.

Acquisition of most of the land was completed by 1986. Since that time, plans for creating the community were drawn to comply with local, regional, state and national development criteria. The land has been undergoing environmental and governmental reviews at all necessary levels. Oak Valley is just beginning construction for golf courses that will, barring delays, open in 1990.

During that time, the developer was buying the land, paying for the planning process. Now it is the beginning stages of paying for construction of golf courses and community infrastructure. Reve- nus will come again to financing. It comes again to financing. Money can come from private sources, individuals, a financial or lending institution or from government financing.

"The National Golf Foundation, whose research has shown that we need to open a course a day from now to the year 2000 to meet demand, is beginning a project that it hopes will help people be successful in developing a golf course. The NGF will review all courses opened in the 1980s. From that list it will conduct a survey to answer the crucial questions:

1. How were courses financed?
2. Have the courses been successful?
3. If so, why? If not, why not?
4. The NGF will try to determine what kinds of marketing institutions and governments need to be more open to development than others.

"We get about 8,000 calls a year related to developing a golf course," Arnold says. "A large number of the calls touch on financing. Financing a golf course, it seems, has been perceived as a high risk. J.J. Cohen has been viewed, historically, as riskier. Particularly the 1970s were not good. But we are hoping to demonstrate with our survey that the failure rate there is no higher than with other businesses."