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, serratet 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."

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 Uruguayan 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."

Eureka! Golf gold being mined

1989 is prime time for nation's builders

BY MARK LESLIE

This is the best of times for golf course builders.

A short while ago, Golf Course Builders Association Executive Director Don Rossi said, "There's no way to buy the land, build a golf course, and make money except to charge exhorbitant fees — unless the land is given to you — because the cost of the land is so, so expensive."

Poof! Suddenly real-estate developers are giving the land away to golf course builders because the developers want a golf course to attract home buyers but don't want to get involved in something they're not expert in.

Beware snags, but money can be found

BY KATHY BISSELL

Getting a golf course from dream to reality requires at least as many complex maneuvers as getting a team to the Super Bowl.

It takes money, talent and time.

Because more people want to play golf, because research reports from groups such as the National Golf Foundation say we need more courses, and because people seem to think there's a lot of money to be made, many individuals and developers want to take the plunge into golf course development.

The difficulties are knowing how to get the funds to start and how to make a project
Northern New England: Surviving in shorter seasons

JULY 1989

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 Massa- chusetts, 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 agen- cies 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 Novem- ber, 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 foot- ing.

Yet, financial success does not hinge on receipts from green fees and car rentals, but on business done before a shovel of earth has been turned.

That business is cementing real estate with golf courses. It has been a rewarding mar- riage. Around 90 percent of golf course-re- sidential division does reportedly is linked to real-estate development.

J.J. Cohen, president of a Littleton, Mass., construction and development company, talks golf gold in New Hampshire. He estimates his Blueberry Hill project in New Ipswich, begun in October 1987 and ear- marked for opening in the fall of 1990, will realize a profit of $35 million to $40 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 recre- tional 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 Massachusetts architects Geoffrey S. Cornish and Brian Silva, which opened last fall.

David Bateman, vice president of Dictar 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've sold 122 single-family lots for an average of $110,000—a total of about $13.4 million."

Subtract $6 million in land and construc- tion costs and Dictar realized a gross profit of up to $7 million.

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

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

The British viewpoint was "Trade Fol- lows 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 the area.

More private courses than ever have wait- ing lists. Some make applicants pay just to be on the list.

Strangely, outside the Sun Belt, the ma- jority who buy fairway lots are non-golfers. Yet they still want a fine golf course. With the exception of location, that point was the same as our course built adjoining a non-player's property. The homeowner promptly knocked down walls, replaced them with huge glass windows and enjoyed the view.

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.