By MARK LESLIE
ANAHEIM, Calif. —
Regional greens construction specifications, less overseeding, more natural ecosystem products and genetic breakthroughs in turfgrass breeding will be on the palette of golf course maintenance in the year 2000, according to Dr. David Kopec.

Kopec, an associate extension specialist in turfgrass at the University of Arizona in Tucson, told an audience of superintendents at the International Golf Course Conference and Show to expect major changes in their jobs due to new technologies, products and perceptions.

"In order to provide areas for wildlife — and with pesticide remuneration — the cost of golf courses is going to go up astronomically," predicted Kopec, who conducts applied field research programs in turfgrass and weed control, water use and irrigation, cultural management and germplasm evaluation for desert turfs.

"The major issues for golf courses by the year 2000 will revolve around environmental management (not just managing the golf course proper but the ecosystem surrounding the course itself), water quality and quantity, and development and changes and retaining qualified personnel," he said.

"The overshadowing issues will be ground-water and surface-water contamination potential, pesticide contamination potential, protection of the public and employees, and wildlife protection, enhancement and what we do about endangered species."

These concerns, he said, are going "to change how we operate golf courses and the size of golf courses and the ratio of turf in the golf course facility."

Kopec, who holds a PhD from the University of Nebraska and

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Changes galore foreseen for 2000

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mudagrass varieties will be growing in different places. In the future, superintendents may be responsible for collecting leachate from drain pipes on greens, filtering it and putting it back on the roughs and fairways, Kopec said.

FAIRWAYS AND ROUGHS

He predicted that Southerners be doing less overseeding because of reduced water availability and a trend toward playing on dormant Bermudagras.

Because of the demand to maintain out-of-play areas to enhance wildlife, Kopec said he foresees decreased fairway size and the development of "transition roughs," with a primary which is playable, a secondary rough which acts more as a penalty, and a tertiary rough of native grasses. "You won't see houses butted up to the rough," he said. "You might see 75 to 80 feet between housing tract developments where you will see a sign posted: 'Agricultural chemicals applied.'"

He added that superintendents be proactive and that they better reward their crews. "They might have more specialized jobs to do and you will want to keep them around," he said.

ROOT-ZONE MODIFICATIONS

"In the next 10 years we'll see big increase in science," Kopec said, specifying sports fibers. "Research in sports turf management can be applied to our fairways."

"By the year 2000 I hope there is a not a single one of you who is applying a toxic insecticide, herbicide or fungicide," he said. "If you have to, apply an agricultural chemical, apply a plant protectant... Get an IPM [Integrated Plant Management] program. And if you do have to apply a chemical, make it a plant protectant agent."

He said future products will be more species-specific, "so there is less chance of eradicating beneficial predators. They will have a shorter half-life residual because they will be used to control a short-term problem... In most cases it will be more expensive because development costs will increase and registration of these materials will as well."

The industry will also benefit from advances in using natural ecosystem products, Kopec said.

MICROCHIPS & GENETICS

Genetic engineering, he said, offers some potential for progress in genes for heat, drought and salt tolerance, insect and disease resistance, herbicide tolerance, pest insects and parasitoids. "The microchip is here to stay," he said, pointing to maintaining service records, payroll, shop inventories, irrigation system, and pesticide application equipment.

"And it might be on your three-gang mowers by the year 2000," he said. "Pollution control devices may be controlled by microchip."

International trade agreements between Canada, the United States and Mexico open up some exciting possibilities.

"For you as superintendents and for researchers at large, exchange of germplasm, ideas and new developments in golf with Mexico and Asia is very exciting," he said.

Kopec also suggested that superintendents be proactive and that they better reward their crews. "They might have more specialized jobs to do and you will want to keep them around," he said.

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