In battle against Canada geese, superintendents wield new weapons

By JOEL JOYNER

PALATINE, Ill. — For years, superintendents have used trained border collies to chase Canada geese from their greens and fairways. But there are new and improved methods of dispersing the big birds, and they don’t require dog food. Canada geese, protected by the Migratory Bird Act, have grown to an army of 3 million strong in the United States. Mowed turfgrass are like a smorgasbord to these grazing beasts. When they descend on a course in big numbers, they are capable of destroying — and defouling — large sections of a layout. A single goose can produce one to three pounds of feces a day, creating an unsightly situation when a gaggle of 100 decides to leave its calling card. Jim Bland, director of Integrated Lakes Management in Gurnee, Ill., reported that a single 100-acre lake in northern Illinois was home to an estimated 12,000 Canada geese as part of a wintertime superflock. “Lawsns can be carpeted with feces,” he observed. Golf course superintendents know the drill: fireworks, whistles, shotguns, visual threats and chase and scare tactics. The geese, however, are just as stubborn and territorial. But to combat this growing invasion, new products and strategies are available, such as lasers, GooseChase and FlightControl.

‘LASER GOOSE-DISSUADER’

The experimental laser device, also known as a “laser goose-dissuader,” has been tested along Lake Galena in Pennsylvania, where an estimated 17,000 goose liked to roost. U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) wildlife services demonstrated the $3,500 “flashlight” in January this year and successfully terrifed the geese into searching for a new home. “The laser beam shved the geese off the lake like a razor on black stubble,” said Matthew Blanchard, a writer for the Philadelphia Inquirer. Powered by AA batteries, the laser cleared approximately 95 percent of the birds from the lake. “When they see the red light, they are terrified,” said Chris

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Wallace joins Turf-Seed, to handle N.E.

HUBBARD, Ore. — Victoria (“Vickie”) Wallace has joined Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green Corp. as an agronomist and North-east professional sales representative. Since 1983, she has served as an agronomist and was involved with professional turfgrass sales and marketing with the former Lots Seed Co. In her new position with Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green, she will support turfgrass managers and distributors in the Northeast from her base in Exeter, R.I. She will promote Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green products to golf course and landscape architects, superintendents, turfgrass sod producers, sports turf managers, and landscape professionals.

Wallace will also lend support to both Turf-Seed and Tee-2-Green Corp.’s marketing divisions in Hubbard. She will also represent both companies at national and regional trade shows.

Wallace holds a bachelor’s degree from Penn State and a master’s from the University of Rhode Island. Turf-Seed products include the new Kentucky bluegrass varieties Blackstone, Brilliant, Moonlight, and NorthStar. Greg Norman on GN-1 Bermuda at his turf farm

Greg Norman on GN-1 Bermuda at his turf farm

‘Super’ Bermudagrass does star turn on sports fields

TAMPA, Fla. — The New York Giants weren’t the only ones taking a pounding on Super Bowl Sunday this year. The turf here at Raymond James Stadium was fine enough to put on before the game, and tough enough to take brutal hits from 300-pound linemen and slashing tackles.

The GN-1 hybrid Bermudagrass turf was imported to the field from Greg Norman’s turf farm in central Florida’s Avon Park. In total, 65,000 square feet of turf were transported to the field on Jan. 11, where frigid night temperatures and even some ice gave cause for concern. “We had a few delays in putting it down because of frost,” said George Toma, the NFL’s long-time turf consultant. “But this turf is tough. It’s more aggressive than other Bermudas.”

Toma said that the field was cut to 5/8th of an inch, the lowest ever for a Super Bowl, and that iron and plenty of water were added to “green it up” before the game. “It made it through with flying colors,” he said of the GN-1 turf that has made its second Super Bowl appearance in the past three seasons.

GOING ON GOLF COURSES

In Corona, Calif., plans are also underway for the installation of GN-1 sod at the new Trilogy at Glen Ivy Golf Course. D a v e Mastroloeo, superintendent at the course and at the Tierra Rejada Golf Course in Moorpark, said the chose GN-1 for Trilogy based on its performance at the Tierra Rejada course that opened in December of 1999. “The turf is a deeper green than other Bermudagrass varieties,” said Mastroloeo.

“It holds its color longer into fall and winter, it has a tremendous recovery rate, and is easier to seed into because it’s less tight than other turfs,” he said.

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Houston-area clubs facing stiff rate hikes for water

By JOEL JOYNER

SPRING, Texas — Water is getting tight in Texas. Pricier, too.

Here on the northern edge of Houston, the water authority has hit golf courses with a nasty punch. Not only are water rates escalating, but courses have been “encouraged” to slash their use of fresh water.

The North Harris County Regional Water Authority (NHCRWA) has doubled the cost of water to 25 cents per 1,000 gallons. The idea, of course, is to conserve an increasing precious resource. The costs are expected to increase again — and again — to as much as $2, soon.

“Nobody’s real happy,” said Richard Kane, assistant superintendent here at the Willow Creek Golf Club. “In the past, as recently as 1999, all you had to pay for was the well permit. It’s been hot and dry here in the state of Texas for the past few summers, so these fees will affect everybody.

Golf courses use between 35 million to 200 million gallons of water per year to keep their turf playable. New courses, trying to get their turf established, typically use up to 150 million gallons. At $2 per 1,000 gallons, those new courses will be paying about $3 million to irrigate their layouts.

“The water authority’s goal is for golf...
Houston water
Continued from page 9

courses to have an alternative source, other than ground water, in the next seven to 10 years," said Kane. "Increasing water pumping fees is a means to reach that goal.

"We're hoping to get an effluent water source from a development that's on the southside of us," Kane added. "There's a treatment plant already in place, and we'd like to get its effluent. But there's a lot of red tape, with county agencies and such."

Another problem, he points out, is transporting the water. "Who pays the cost there?" Kane says. "It will probably be us. We have plenty of water now, but come next July and August we could be hurting."

CATALYST FOR CHANGE
One course that has already lined up an effluent supply is the privately owned Raveneaux Country Club, a 36-hole facility also here in Spring. Management has negotiated a seven-year agreement with a local treatment plant that produces some 3 million gallons per day.

"Raveneaux has contracted for up to half that amount," said Randy George, the recently departed Raveneaux superintendent who is now at Pine Forest Country Club. "Currently, the water will be available at no charge. But the associated cost of infrastructure will be absorbed by the course.

"Before I left, the pipeline from the facility to the course was estimated to cost $300,000," he noted. "The water authority has also discussed the possibility of taxing the use of effluent water, as well. The tax would be a source of income to fund the authority's main objective of securing long-term surface water. "The water use fee, from my point of view, will turn out to be a positive catalyst for change," he added. "These fees and the increased costs will motivate each and every course to better manage this limited resource or find an alternative answer."

As water rates keep rising, however, the hard financial reality will be reflected on the bottom lines of golf course balance sheets.

Florida drought worsens
Continued from page 11

and Saturday nights only, and the odd ones Thursday and Sunday nights only. If things don't improve by spring, we'll be in serious trouble."

LOW LAKE LEVELS
Cool winter temperatures may ease some of the water woes, but turf management adjustments can only be stretched so far. "We certainly do more handwatering," said Plummer, "We have portable sprinklers for mounds and excessively dry areas, granular wetting agents for our mounds, and there's been a reduction in our mowing schedule. The cooler weather enables us to get away with longer periods between mowings on our non-overseeded areas.

"Very low lake levels at this point worry me the most," he said. "Our course is approximately a foot below normal levels. This doesn't sound like much, but we have shallow lakes and only two recharge wells, which are controlled by the county."

This hard drought, which first hit the state in April 1998, is considered the worst since the 1930s, according to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), with 2000 as the driest year on record. "We finished low last year," said Tony Steppich, superintendent at the Golf Club of Jacksonville, "and we're not starting off so well this year, either."

NORTH HOUSTON WATER COST PROJECTIONS

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<th>MILLION OF GALLONS PER YEAR</th>
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<th>150</th>
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<td>$1.12</td>
<td>$1.25</td>
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<th>Liquid cooled - smoother, quieter, longer engine life, easier to service</th>
<th>Air cooled, noisier, shorter life</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hopper</td>
<td>4 plus cubic yards</td>
<td>3 plus cubic yards</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clutch</td>
<td>Electric - quiet operation when vacuum is disengaged - easy cold starting</td>
<td>No vacuum disengagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tires</td>
<td>13&quot; wide fairway type tires, softer footprint</td>
<td>10&quot; wide turf tires</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controls</td>
<td>User-friendly controls within driver's reach</td>
<td>Driver must dismount to start/set speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitch</td>
<td>5th wheel or standard tractor hitch</td>
<td>Tractor hitch only</td>
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