Bob Lohmann makes a close examination of Basamid, one of golf’s few future fumigation options.

As we’ve all been waiting for the clock to run out on methyl bromide use, it’s surprising to see just how few fumigation options have surfaced to fill that pending void.

We had the opportunity this summer to use one of those options, Basamid, as part of a summer greens renovation project at Brown County Golf Course in Oneida, Wis., up near Green Bay. It went very well, so I wanted to share our experience, and that of Brown County GC’s superintendent Scott Anthes, as one window on the future.

There were two main factors that pointed us toward using the Basamid fumigation method at Brown County GC:
- Anthes has used Basamid before, to fumigate a chipping green;
- This summer project was approved very quickly (the way so many renovations are these days – when the money is made available) and we had very limited time to get all 18 greens ready, fumigate with MB, get seed in the ground, and achieve meaningful growth before the fall.

Instead, we at Lohmann Golf Designs worked with the contractor, Janesville, Wisconsin-based Links Land, LLC, to prepare a few greens at a time, after which Anthes and his crew would come in and fumigate. Basically, Anthes followed Links Land around the golf course as we went along.

“They would strip a green and the surrounds of all sod,” Anthes recalls, “and then they’d grade them, eliminating all the sand dams at the edges. Then they came in and put in the slit drainage. Once the slit drainage was done, we fumigated to be sure we got all the Poa seed. After 5 days of fumigation, we aerified to let the gas escape. Then we came back and fine graded a bit, resodded the surrounds and seeded the greens with Luminary bentgrass.”

These greens were interesting. They were old push-up jobs and drained very poorly. Indeed, that poor drainage and the infestation of Poa, which led to severe winter kill this past year (and several years prior), were two primary reasons for the renovation.

But this poor drainage was one of the reasons Basamid worked well on this job. Basamid is a granular product that emits a gas – the fumigant – when it comes into contact with water. That gas can move quite quickly through a green’s drainage network. In fact, I’m not sure the deployment of Basamid is a very good idea on greens that drain too well, i.e. those modern, USGA-spec green profiles. If you’re dealing with old push-up greens where you’re sure there is little to no drain tile in them, it’s a solid option.

Here’s a good capsule of what to do and expect:
- Day 1, put the Basamid down and water heavily (avoid windy days, on account of its fine, granular nature; mornings make sense).
- Day 2, water less heavily.
- Day 3, water three times – morning, noon and night.
Methyl bromide (MB)
A quick update/reminder on where things stand with regard to use of methyl bromide (MB) on golf courses.

Right now, supers are allowed to tap into existing stockpiles of MB until April 30, 2014. Whatever is purchased by that date can be used until its depletion. The GCSAA is continuing its lobbying effort: In July, MB registrants and GCSAA officially requested that the EPA amend the existing memorandum of understanding to allow golf course use of MB to remain on the label beyond the current deadline.

There’s little question that MB is an effective fumigant, ridding soil of any/all traces of lingering grass strains (usually Poa annua) in preparation of reseeding or resodding greens. However, the writing’s on the wall. What’s more, iodomethane, or methal iodone, one MB alternative, is no longer available to golf courses, as last spring the manufacturer removed it from the market.
Brown County GC stayed open with temporary greens throughout the whole process, which was a little nerve-wracking.

Doing contour adjustments and applying the finish grade.

on the 14th green: a couple women golfers were asking, Are we all gonna die? Like I told them, according to the label, you don't need the mask and suit, but I'm overcautious. I didn’t want it on my clothes during the day. But their concerns were just another reason I suggest applying the product early in the morning, before golfers show up.

"It's all part of the rigmarole, but I think it was worth it. You have to come up with a master plan for applying the product and be prepared to present it at any time. You have to have buffer signs, application site signs. Some state agencies have to be notified... The labels are a lot more strict than the labels guys are using for methyl bromide. To my knowledge there are no buffer zones with that, for example. After you're done, you have to generate a post-fumigation assessment for the state. You have to keep track of the weather, because if it's too windy and rainy, it's not practical to lay it down.

"We stayed open with temporary greens throughout the whole process, which was a little nerve-wracking. I might shut the course down if we fumigated again, but I'm very happy with how it all turned out. If the project involved doing all the greens at once, early enough in the year to use methyl bromide, and waiting for all of them to grow-in, that's one thing. But I needed to get seed in the ground ASAP, and the Basamid allowed that. I've got great growth on these greens because we didn't have to wait. I feel like we're in great shape headed into the fall and winter, the way the grass has come in."

And the cost? Well, that might be the best part. "I talked to a company about doing this with methyl bromide and they quoted me 50 grand. I put the Basamid on myself and it was $9,500. Big savings," he says. GCI

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