



COMMUNICATIONS: WHERE'S THE GAP?

The turfgrass industry is fragmented—let me make that crystal clear. By comparison, the mushroom industry is simple and straight forward. They produce one product; we have many. That one product is grown under controlled conditions; our products are subject to the whims, vagaries and vicissitudes of nature. The producers of mushrooms are few and far between. Turf is grown by 11,000 golf courses, no one knows on how many cemeteries (23,000 in Pennsylvania alone), millions of home owners, thousands of schools, universities, parks, airfields and highways. (Georgia mows 400,000 acres of roadside turf a year.)

Now, it is less difficult to visualize the extent of existing communications gap. Research in turf voices its findings and recommendations to a considerable degree through the cooperative extension service. A valiant effort has been expended by the extension to get the latest, accurate information to those who need it. Admittedly, the extension service is handicapped by shortage of manpower and funds. But try to imagine the nearly insurmountable task of providing the right information for each segment and each individual in the turf industry. It boggles the mind.

Research and practical information is sought eagerly by many firms serving the industry through traveling representatives who sell seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, equipment, irrigation systems and services. With information being gleaned from many sources, it is easy to see how differences arise. Sometimes a firm's advertising message carries recommendations, some of which are heavily oriented toward one specific product—theirs. They cannot be

faulted for this, but there is the implication "caveat emptor." ("Let the buyer beware.")

A tremendous amount of practical information is exchanged at meetings of various turfgrass and golf superintendent associations. There is a chance here for a gap, when all factors are not taken into account. The considerations for cemetery turf are vastly different than those for athletic fields, school playgrounds or golf course tees, fairways and greens.

Several publications are doing an excellent job of bridging the communications gap. One problem, though, always seems to be with us: Do those who need the information read it when they need it? Many let the magazines pile up until they have the time to read—mainly in the off-season. Here, then, is a serious gap.

Turfgrass councils in several states are working hard to coordinate all available information and to distribute it to everyone through the extension service, newsletters and by way of local and regional turf schools. One existing gap is membership. Very few outside the membership receive the mailings simply because they are not known. The gap is closing, but, oh, so slowly.

Few segments of turfgrass can make it on their own. A continual input is essential for a viable industry. A complete criss-cross and coordination of information is basic to success in bridging the communications gap. We are making progress!

Q—*Over the years, the fairways on our golf course have become infested with *Poa annua* until we now have no more than 1 to 3 per cent permanent grasses. We have tried arsenic of different formulations and have succeeded only in creating deserts where no grass will grow. We have everything at our disposal, but*

we seem to lack the expertise to proceed in the right direction. What can you suggest? (Canada)

A—In your situation, one way to go is to try to maintain what you have with frequent, light watering during the summer along with judicious applications of fungicides to provide the membership with the best playing conditions possible under the circumstances. Now, because the winter has reduced your *Poa* population to a mat of brown straw, you have another problem. You may obtain considerable relief and better playing conditions by using a modern scarifier-seeder to establish a blend of the new turf-type perennial ryegrasses.

Looking forward to a permanent population of perennial grasses that can resist *Poa annua*, I would suggest that you select two or three important fairways for a program of burning with arsenicals in August and reseeding with the scarifier-seeder using a blend of the turf-type perennial ryegrasses along with the best blend of bluegrasses. At the moment, it is impossible to go into detail on a fertilizer program, but it should be based on zero-phosphorus combination to encourage the permanent grasses and discourage the *Poa annua*. After the bluegrasses are well established, a program using tri-calcium arsenate can be instituted to keep the *Poa* in check and to encourage the permanent grasses.

Of very great importance is the irrigation program, which should be done using the very minimum amount of water at infrequent intervals. The permanent bluegrasses will require generous fertilization preferably with slow-acting, long-lasting synthetic, organic fertilizers. It will feed the grasses as they need it.

A very important consideration is that of fully informing the entire membership of how serious the situ-

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ation is on course. Tell them that there will be times when the fairways will be virtually unplayable except for preferred lies. Unless this is done, the superintendent could be in serious trouble.

Q—*There is high-quality coal under the land around our golf course and strip-mining is contemplated. We read so much about "the ravaged hills," "rape of the land," "erosion and silt-filled streams" that we (and many others) are deeply concerned.*

Should we form a citizens group and lie in front of the giant strippers to prevent the stripping? Is there a way to restore the land so that it is once more beautiful and useful? We need help! (Illinois)

A—I am glad that you (and others) are concerned. Yes, form a citizens group, not to prevent stripping, but to demand that, after removing the coal, the land be roughly leveled, limed, fertilized and seeded to a mixture of sturdy grasses and permanent legumes. When you are successful in withholding coal revenue from the

strippers to enforce proper revegetation your property values could be enhanced rather than depreciated.

This has been done so successfully in Southeastern Ohio that beef, grazed on the proper combination of grasses and legumes, established on land from which coal was strip-mined, topped the Chicago market. Also, beauty was restored, the land is more useful than before, and erosion is ended.

This Q & A is only the "tip of the iceberg." To elaborate full recommendations in this piece is impossible. There is a way! Most popular writers of the day lament the "rape" instead of learning how to correct it and to tell the legislators that it can be done. This writer will accept questions on the subject and they will be answered. □

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most extensive research on turfgrass nematode problems has been conducted in that state. Unfortunately, potential nematode problems have not been investigated extensively in the past in the cool-humid regions of North America. Recent studies, such as those reported here, indicate that there are situations where nematodes may be causing serious problems on cool-season turfgrasses by restricting turfgrass growth, particularly on putting greens. Thus, the golf course superintendent in those regions should be alert to this potential problem.

Nematicides should not be applied indiscriminately. These materials are extremely toxic not only to nematodes, but to man when applied improperly. The application of a nematicide should only be made after a soil nematode analysis has been made and a nematicide recommendation given by a qualified nematologist. Nematodes can rarely be eradicated. Nematicides provide a temporary reduction in the parasite nematode population. Once chemical nematode control is initiated, it usually should be continued regularly. Thus, the use of nematicides for nematode control should only be utilized where the problem has been identified. □