

PENNSYLVANIA SUPERINTENDENT'S BENSULIDE PROGRAM

You Don't Have To Live With Poa Annua

Bob Reighter, superintendent at Pilmont Country Club in Huntingdon Valley, Pa. has lived with *Poa annua* fairways for 14 years. To use his own words, from the Fourth of July to October 15th every year has been "pure hell. Now, although it gets rough at times, I have quite a bit more control since I have started using bensulide."

Reighter has applied bensulide to the fairways and greens on his north course five times in six years. That was two years in a row, then he skipped a year and did some seeding in weak spots, then three more years in a row.

"I still have *Poa annua*," he told GOLFDOM, "but I feel that I have it under control. I have reduced it from 60 percent to 20 percent in the fairways and 10 percent in the greens."

Six years ago, his approaches in August and September were mostly goosegrass and dead annual bluegrass. Over a period of two years, he closed the north course in the middle of October and sodded half the approaches each year. This totaled about 80,000 square feet of Penn-cross bent. He said these were also treated with bensulide. The only annual bluegrass in these areas came from aerifying in the fall of the year. For this reason, he discontinued fall aerifying two years ago. He now aerifies in the middle of June.

"Timing is very important as to when bensulide should be applied," he said. "I have put it on anywhere from the last week of July to the second week in August. A good guide is when your night temperatures drop into the 55-60 range. I am usually up a few times a night just to take a look at the thermometer."

He said he did not have any root damage or burn from the bensulide until this past year. About three weeks after it was applied, the fairway grasses started to lose their root



Reighter

system, but with light watering he managed to pull them through with only minor wilting. He said this was due mostly to the thatch condition.

"Late in October, I sliced the fairways to remove some thatch," he said. Depending on how they look in July, I expect to skip another year's application of bensulide. The greens showed no signs of damage."

He said the collars have also been treated with the greens but he has had a different situation there. The *Poa* population on the collars is 40 to 50 percent. The bensulide does not kill the existing *Poa* plants and with the spray programs and water practices on the greens, he has been able to keep the *Poa* on the collars. With seed being cut into them on the off years, he feels they will increase in bentgrass population.

"The bensulide was applied in the form of Pre San at 15 pounds per acre on the fairways and nine ounces per 1,000 square feet on the greens," he said. "It was applied on the fairways with a 200-gallon sprayer equipped with a boom and tee jet

nozzle using 50 gallons of water per acre. This was watered in with fairway sprinklers. Fifteen minutes a setting was used, and this followed by 30-minute settings in the morning. The bensulide was applied to the green with a spray hawk boom using five gallons of water per 1,000 square feet. This was also watered in with a syringe nozzle by a regular watering the next morning."

His fertilizer program for greens is four to six pounds of nitrogen per year using 20-0-16 fertilizer and a 6-3-0 organite sewage sludge. On the fairways, he uses the sludge in December, June and August for a total of 1½ to two pounds of nitrogen for the year. The fairways are sprayed for preventative control of disease and insects. The greens are also sprayed on a normal program.

"For years," he said, "our members would rave about the golf course in the spring of the year and always add 'but what will it be like in August?' Each year, I cut the fairways and put more seed in them. The past six years I have done this twice. In the past four years, I have used less than 200 pounds of bentgrass seed. I have done sodding, but not much beside the approaches."

When Reighter first started on the *Poa* program, he used calcium arsenate applied in August at a two-pound rate on the fairways. Then in early September, he cut Penn-cross bent into the fairways at 60 pounds to the acre. On his 14th fairway, he applied bensulide at the 15 pounds per acre rate. The difference in the next year was outstanding but the price at the time was \$34 a gallon. "During that year the price dropped to \$19 a gallon and that fall we changed programs," he said. "Now my members are just as pleased in the fall of the year as they are in the spring." □