

Helicopters may become a common sight on Illinois golf courses

by Steve Derrick

As the flagpole casts its first morning shadow across the ninth green at Danville Country Club, the Professional Turf Specialties helicopter is already standing by waiting for daybreak. Before the day is over it will have sprayed Dacthal and Daconil for both Jim Brant at the Danville and Don

Walker at the Elks Country Club. Along with that, Scotty Boggs and Park Commissioner Ray Randall will have them apply Tupersan to the city's golf course, Harrison Park. Normally Harrison Park uses Dacthal, but the scars left by new irrigation ditches will require overseeding and Tupersan has no effect on the new seed.

Steve Derrick is president and co-owner of Professional Turf Specialties of Normal, Ill. Besides spraying from helicopters, the company sells most major brands of turf care supplies and equipment.

The pilot gives the go-ahead and the first load is on its way. Flying about 5 feet off the ground at 60 miles per hour is certainly a fast way to spray fairways, but an accurate one also. In just 2½ hours the job is completed at Danville Country Club and it's time to move to the Elks.

Superintendent Don Walker and the pilot are already going over last minute details as the crew arrives at the Elk Club with the mixing tank and the nurse truck. At the Elks Club the fairways are to be sprayed with both Dacthal and Daconil, but the roughs



LEFT: Spray nozzles are carefully checked out before takeoff. BELOW: The helicopter flies at 60 mph about 5 feet off the ground when spraying a golf course.



will get an application of Dacthal only.

"This presents no problem," says Professional Turf co-owner John Latting. "We mix one load at a time. This allows us to be as versatile as the superintendent requests. In fact, we can spray one fairway with one product and the next fairway with a totally different one."

The procedure used by Professional Turf Specialties is quick and efficient. The nurse truck holds 1,800 gallons of water and a 100-gallon fiberglass tank. Water is pumped into the 100-gallon tank and the products are then mixed and pumped into the helicopter. Depending on the job, two or three loads can be mixed at a time and each load could be different.

The helicopters are Hughes 300-C models with 100-gallon tanks. For golf course spraying they carry 65-gallon loads, spraying 10 gallons per acre. Each ship has a 30-foot boom which puts down a spray swath of 48 feet. To

assure accuracy, the spraying is done through D-8 pressure-sensitive nozzles and an Agrinatics spraying system.

The Elks Club takes a little longer, but by 2:30 p.m. the job is finished and the crew heads for Harrison Park to spray Tupersan. It's just 2 miles from the Elks Club, so transportation time is no factor.

"When we can get more than one job in a town it's a lot easier," relates Latting. "Normally we spray one golf course a day then move to the next one and set up for an early start the next morning."

The procedure is the same at Harrison. Superintendent Scotty Boggs will have them spray Tupersan at 10 pounds per acre on the fairways only. The rough, tees, and greens will not be sprayed.

By the time all 50 acres are covered at Harrison Park, the flagpole's shadow has moved to the other side of

the green. The crew picks up the last of the boxes and loads the helicopter on the custom-built trailer used for transporting.

Their schedule reads Davenport, Iowa, tomorrow. There Superintendent Mike Mulvihill will have them spray Dacthal and Daconil for crabgrass and leaf spot control at Davenport Country Club.

Next door in Moline, Ill., Tom Vanderwalle has scheduled an application of Daconil for the Short Hills Country Club fairways.

When asked why he uses a helicopter, Vanderwalle replied, "It's simply the timing and economics. It normally takes us 2 days to do it and this is a time of the year when I can use an extra 2 days."

Downstate at Peoria Country Club, Dave Fearis gives a similar answer: "I like to use the helicopter service because it saves my labor and I get a good job." □



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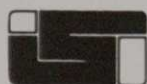
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