Keeping ahead of golfers has always been a challenge for superintendent Kenny Hoehn and his staff at Smiley's GC in Lenexa, Kan. Unfortunately, many of them gummed up mower rollers, leaving Hoehn and his crew to clean mowers after every few turns and causing longer mowing times.

Solution
Find a natural, high-quality fertilizer to work into the greens quickly, reducing the need to clean rollers and decreasing mowing time.
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and listed feather, meat and bone meal as main ingredients. Hoehn decided the best way to choose one of the products was to set up two trials on two greens.

Green one setup

Eight pounds of product A, a 15-3-8 fine grade, was applied on a green at 8:30 a.m. using spreading setting M and covering about 1,200 square feet.

Fifteen pounds of product B, an 8-3-5 fine grade, was applied on the west side of the same green using spreader setting R and covering about 1,200 square feet.

The applications were watered for 10 minutes. A second 10-minute watering was made prior to cutting the next day. The greens had been mowed two days before. Skies were clear and the temperature was 45 degrees on the morning of the application. The greens also had a layer of moisture from dew.

Green two setup

Two days after the application on green one, Hoehn applied 7 pounds of product A at 10:30 a.m. using spreader setting M and covering about 1,100 square feet on green two. Fourteen pounds of product B was applied on the north side of the same green using spreader setting R and covering about 1,100 feet. Both applications were watered for 10 minutes and watered again that night for 20 to 30 minutes. The green was last mowed at 9:30 a.m. the day before.

The mowing test took place the next day. Skies were clear, it was 43 degrees, and the turf was still moist from the dew and the 2 a.m. watering.

The granulars of product A, according to Hoehn, were difficult to see, but the granulars of product B were highly visible. After two days and watering, product B was sitting visibly on top of the turf and had not worked into the turf layer. But product A was not visible, having quickly worked itself into the turf. Hoehn noted that product B seemed to swell from the moisture.

Consequently, the back rollers picked up a lot of product B when the green was mowed. Mowing heights were also thrown off by the buildup, often by as much as one-sixteenth inch.

Conclusion

After the trials, Hoehn decided to use product A — Roots Turf Food manufactured by Independence, Mo.-based Roots Inc. — which helps produce a strong root system and dissolves quickly into the turf. Even after numerous watering, the fertilizer didn’t stick to the rollers or show up in mowing baskets.

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