

RESEARCH, CHECK IT OUT FOR YOURSELF

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All too often no check of untreated areas is left when various golf course maintenance operations (mainly chemical applications) are performed. The result is that many times we never know whether or not the product controlled the problem. Still worse, we miss the opportunity to see if there are any adverse reactions to the procedure.

During the summer of 1994, we had a patch disease on some of our greens. Samples sent off to different universities all come back saying a different disease was responsible. No fungicides tested after the symptoms were present were effective in controlling the disease. After talking to several people during the winter, I decided to try two different sterol inhibitor fungicides at the label recommended rate and frequency of 3x4 oz applications made approximately April 1, May 1 & June 1. A total of four greens were sprayed with each product, but an untreated check area was left on one green with each product.

The reason I left the check areas was to see if we had any disease pressure in 1995 and if either fungicide was effective if we did have any disease. We did not have any of the disease on any green in 1995 treated or not treated.

All sprayed areas became dark green but, to my surprise, we observed thinning on all areas sprayed with either product. The thinning started in June and continued to get worse all the way through August and did not totally recover until December. In addition to the thinning, the blades on the grass were very wide and laid over. No thinning was observed on any untreated greens nor on the untreated check of the greens that were sprayed.

Perhaps the same rate at the same frequency sprayed on greens in cooler climates would not cause the problems I saw. Perhaps lighter rates or fewer applications would not cause a problem. There are 5 sterol inhibitor fungicides presently on the market. The rates differ among the various products but I now believe that 3 applications of the higher label rates of any of the five may cause the results I saw during the summer months.