

**Core cultivation and sod establishment**

**A. R. Kowalewski, T. D. VanLoo, and J. N. Rogers, III**

In Michigan, sod is often the choice for athletic field renovation. When soil layering is an issue, rooting and playability often become compromised as playing seasons endure. Core cultivation (aerification) alleviates these issues, but cannot interrupt playability, so the practice is often delayed. One possible alternative is pre-harvest core cultivation. The objective of this study was to determine if pre-harvest core cultivation of Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) sod grown on sandy loam soil would: a) significantly decrease the overall weight and strength of sod at harvest, and b) improve establishment quality on a sand site. Factors included in this experiment were, sod type and core cultivation. Sod types were conventional and big roll sod. Core cultivation treatments included pre-harvest core cultivation at 5 and 10% (one and two passes, respectively) affected surface area, post-harvest core cultivation at 5 and 10% affected surface area, and no cultivation treatment. Core cultivated sod received 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch (3.2 mm) of sand topdressing after cultivation treatments, sod that received no cultivation treatments did not receive sand topdressing. Data collected included sod weight and strength at the time of harvest, color and quality, and post establishment sod strength and rooting measurements.