

Using Wetting Agents To Save Water And Improve Turf Conditions

Seymour Golf and Country Club
Jim McGarvey, superintendent

North Vancouver, British Columbia

Issue

With over 100 inches of annual rainfall, Seymour Golf and Country Club would not normally be a golf course facing water issues. However, the fairway topdressing program designed to improve playing conditions during the wetter months had unintended consequences during dry months. With several inches of sand at the surface, and the club's desire for fast and firm playing conditions, the *Poa annua* dominated fairways began to struggle with moisture stress during the warm and dry summer months.

Action

To address this issue, Superintendent Jim McGarvey decided to apply the same wetting agents to the fairways that had been effective on greens and tees. The goal of these applications was to help water penetrate deeper into the root zone, improving irrigation effectiveness and overall turf health. Applications would take place during the warmest and driest months. The first trial involved applying the product to the final 150 yards of the 18th fairway using the same rate applied to the greens. The results were excellent and the program was expanded to include all of the fairways.

Results

The first season of the wetting agent program yielded water savings of approximately 20 percent. This translates to an average annual savings of \$12,500 to \$15,000. Turf loss during the summer has been reduced to a level that allowed the club to eliminate annual fairway overseeding, saving an additional \$15,000 per year. The combined savings of water and seed completely offset the cost of the wetting agent program, and playing conditions are much improved. In fact, the club routinely receives comments that they have the best combination of dense and firm fairways in the area.



A fairway topdressing program designed to improve conditions during the wetter months caused moisture stress during the dry months. Applying wetting agents addressed this issue and led to overall water savings.