



Dormant turf cannot recover from traffic stress because it is not actively growing. Policies should be put in place to limit injury during the offseason.

SHOULD CARTS BE PERMITTED TO DRIVE ON DORMANT TURF?

BY ZACH NICOLUDIS | AGRONOMIST, CENTRAL REGION

A reprieve from winter weather can serve up an opportunity for golfers to play when they would otherwise be dreaming of teeing it up in a warmer climate. While rounds played during the offseason can drive unexpected revenue, especially if golfers use a cart, don't overlook the impact winter cart traffic can have on turf health during the primary golf season.

When turf is actively growing, it has the ability to recover from stresses like cart traffic. However, this is not the case for many golf courses in the northern part of the country during the winter months when the turf is dormant or semi-dormant. Any injury or damage that is sustained at this time of year will not recover until temperatures warm in the spring. In a worst-case scenario, damage from winter play may be severe enough that it needs to be repaired with seed or sod. Such work is time consuming and occupies valuable labor hours in the spring when there are many other important tasks that must be completed to prepare the golf course for the upcoming season.

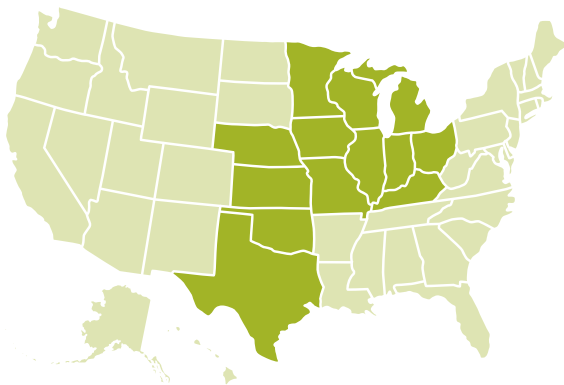
Golfers are encouraged, and should take it upon themselves, to walk if possible when playing a round when the turf is dormant. If your lawn mower has collected dust because it has been weeks or months since your lawn has been mowed, the turf at your local course and at home is dormant.

When continuous cart paths are available, it is recommended that cart use be restricted to the path only. A short spell of above-average temperatures is not a reason to let carts drive on the turf. In fact, warm winter weather often leads to soft conditions that increase the risk of cart damage. A policy that restricts carts to the path from late fall until the spring should be strictly followed to help provide optimum conditions during the primary golf season.



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