



Ready, Set, Wait

By Paul Jacobs, agronomist, Northeast Region | March 3, 2017



It may feel like spring, but turfgrass recovery is still limited. Take advantage of underutilized areas to avoid damaging high-priority playing surfaces.

Above-average temperatures have allowed golfers to start their season earlier than expected this year. A few days of warm weather during late winter can generate unexpected revenue for golf facilities, but superintendents must remain cautious because more cold weather could be on the way. The abnormally high temperatures have presented superintendents with several issues that are not typical for this time of year.

Mowing and rolling – Many courses in the southern portion of the Northeast Region have already mowed or rolled putting greens and courses in northern areas have been removing covers and preparing for play. Although golfers may be enjoying their first rounds of the year, they should be aware that most facilities do not yet have their full maintenance staff and course conditions will reflect that fact. Most labor budgets in the Northeast Region are calculated with a predetermined start date for seasonal staff. Staff cannot be easily added this early in the season, so most facilities are severely understaffed. Limited turf growth and staffing mean that midseason playing conditions should not be expected at this time of year.

Putting green covers – Some courses in northern portions of the Northeast Region have removed putting green covers to help turf retain winter hardiness and prevent early and unwanted growth. If high temperatures are forecast to dip below freezing, putting greens that have been uncovered should be covered again.

Snow mold prevention – Additional fungicide applications to protect against snow mold has been a topic of conversation among many in northern areas. Snow cover is required for Typhula blight – i.e., gray snow mold – development, so most facilities should be in the clear. However, if more snowfall is probable in your area and fine turf areas have already been mowed several times, an additional preventative fungicide application may be necessary.

Poa annua seedhead suppression – Research from Virginia Tech shows that an application of ethephon during winter, followed by the conventional trinexapac-ethyl and ethephon seedhead suppression program, can help reduce *Poa annua* seedhead production during spring. The recent stretch of warm weather has provided a great opportunity for superintendents to make a winter application of ethephon if it is part of their plan for 2017.

Traffic – Concentrated traffic on turf when growth is limited can cause thinning and may create other issues later in the season. Courses should continue to monitor turf health and manage traffic to avoid excessive wear. Hitting from nonconventional areas or artificial turf mats on teeing grounds and driving ranges will limit wear on high-priority areas during a period of slow recovery.

February golf in the Northeast Region is an unexpected bonus, but turf conditions for the long season ahead should not be compromised for a few early rounds. For more information regarding warm spring weather and how it affects the golf course, read the article, “[A Warm Spring is Good for Golf, But...](#)”

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