



October Regional Roundtable

By John Foy, regional director and Patrick O'Brien, agronomist, Southeast Region

October 2, 2015

The Good, Bad and Ugly of El Niño

By John Foy, regional director, Southeast Region

For the past few months an El Niño and warmer surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean have been in place. Even though its thousands of miles away from the Southeast Region, the El Niño does have an effect on weather patterns. While the tropical waves that have been coming off the West Coast of Africa have not been able to develop into major storms or hurricanes that have reached the U.S., there have been some negative impacts. The bad part of the current El Niño situation is that multiple tropical low pressure systems in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico have remained stationary for extended periods of time, resulting in waves of tropical moisture slowly moving north along the lower southeast coast and into the Gulf Coast states.



Rainfall in combination with heavy cloud cover and reduced sunlight has deteriorated conditioning and turf coverage in fairways at golf courses in Florida.

Over the past few weeks there have been extended periods of frequent, and at times very heavy, rainfall in Florida and many areas of the lower Southeast Region. In mid-September, many areas of Florida were inundated with over 8 inches of rain in a 48-hour period as the remnants of Tropical Storm Erika slowly moved north. In addition to direct storm damage, localized flooding further delayed preparations for the upcoming winter season at many courses. Very

limited sunlight as a result of cloud cover over the past several weeks also has had a pronounced negative impact on bermudagrass growth, health and quality.

On Sept. 10, 2015, the Climate Prediction Center produced an El Niño advisory saying there is a 95 percent chance of a strong El Niño effect continuing through the winter of 2015/2016. If this holds true – and based on previous winters when a strong El Niño effect was in place – the Southeast Region could experience a weather pattern bringing above average precipitation and below average temperature.

Preparations for the winter golf season are underway in the lower Southeast Region and naturally it is advised to err on the side of caution. Care should be exercised with cultural management practices like aeration and verticutting to avoid exerting additional mechanical stress on turf when intense environmental stress factors already exist. Also, appropriate heights of cut and fertilization for putting greens, tees and fairways are key considerations to promote sustained, balanced growth and carbohydrate production and storage for surviving the winter and early spring of next year.

Fall Armyworm Alert

By Patrick O'Brien, agronomist, Southeast Region



High populations of fall armyworm already have been spotted at many coastal golf courses in the Carolina's and Georgia.

Over the past 60 days, most coastal areas of the Carolina's and Georgia have experience over 30 inches of rain. The wet weather has helped to elevate fall armyworm populations at many coastal area golf courses. The lush, green bermudagrass leaves in roughs along wood lines are prime feeding grounds for fall armyworm larvae. Now is the time to begin scouting routines and

implement control measures. Sometimes armyworms are difficult to visually detect, as they blend in so well, but a good indicator are areas with flocks of birds that likely are feeding on armyworms.

Before implementing armyworm control measures, a good tip is to mow the turfgrass to better expose the larvae to the treatment. Treating late in the day is also a plus, as well as avoiding mowing for several days after treatment. Without control measures, fall armyworms will feast on turf and it will take weeks for new leaf growth to reappear. Stay alert now and don't be surprised by this insect pest of bermudagrass.

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