

What Happened To Our Golf Course?

By Derf Soller, agronomist, West Region

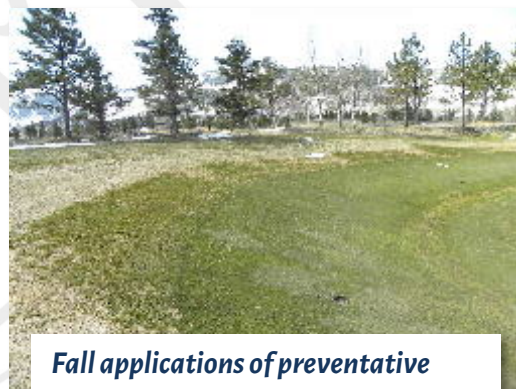
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A recent *quick* one-thousand-mile trip across Colorado, and numerous phone conversations with superintendents in adjoining states, has led to some common threads and comments.

One commonality is that it's still not really spring, no matter what the calendar says. Winter snow mold activity has been showing its ugly head. Many golf courses experienced some level of disease activity this winter, but I guess you could say it's part of the price of doing business.

Golfers and course management staff always want to know *what happened*, but unfortunately, it is just not that easy to say. Most often it is not just one thing that can cause increases in winter damage, but more likely a combination of many factors.

Good turf health going into winter is one ideal that turf managers strive to have in place before the snow flies, but even that is not entirely in his or her control. Did fall aeration take place at the proper time to allow for adequate turf recovery? Did cutting heights on putting greens get raised to a more turf-friendly length, early enough in the fall to allow for more leaf tissue to be present? Did greens have a chance to harden off by not mowing and watering every day? Did golfers encourage the superintendent to do what the course needed, or were they part of the problem, expecting summer playing conditions to last well into the fall?



Fall applications of preventative fungicides on turf cannot guarantee total disease control, but imagine if the effort was not made. There was very little disease control where no products were applied.

Just because good protective fungicides were applied in the fall, this does not guarantee 100 percent protection, for many of the reasons just listed. But preventative applications do make a difference and are certainly well worth the time, money and effort.

Comments from superintendents from around the region include:

“If it would only warm up, we’d be ok.” Utah

“Things looked better three weeks ago when the snow melted, but the cold has set us back.” Wyoming

“Turn off the dang wind!” Colorado

“Don’t the golfers know it is still April? Bet they aren’t mowing their lawns yet either.” Montana

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