

The Benefits Of Precision Spraying

By Larry Gilhuly, agronomist, West Region | July 21, 2017



GPS-guided sprayers can deliver precise applications to turf areas on a golf course.

The greens at Priddis Greens Golf and Country Club were at a crossroads approximately four years ago. Sitting in the rolling foothills of the Canadian Rockies outside of Calgary, Alberta, the predominantly bentgrass putting greens on both golf courses at the 36-hole complex were being overrun with *Poa annua*. With a severe winter climate and increasing damage to *Poa annua* putting green turf, a decision was made to replant the greens with bentgrass. The new greens on the Hawk Course opened to rave reviews and the golf course successfully hosted the Canadian Women's Open in 2016. The greens on the Raven Course are scheduled for replanting this summer. The bentgrass putting greens have been successful at Priddis Greens, but keeping *Poa annua* from reestablishing is a challenge. Part of the answer has been precision spray equipment.

GPS-guided sprayer technology has been successfully used in agriculture for years. An increasing number of golf courses are also using this technology to make precise spray applications. Priddis Greens Superintendent James Beebe turned to GPS-guided spray technology as an effective way to precisely apply products that can discourage *Poa annua* from growing on the creeping bentgrass putting greens without damaging the Kentucky bluegrass collars. With the experimental use of paclobutrazol now permitted in Canada, GPS-technology has allowed Beebe to take advantage of the growth regulator without risking overspray on sensitive areas.

Thus far the results have been nothing short of outstanding. There has been no damage to the collars and definite reductions in *Poa annua* on the Hawk Course putting greens. The GPS-guided sprayer automatically stops spraying approximately 1 foot from the edge of every putting green, ensuring that collars do not receive unintended treatment. Hand weeding provides the final piece to the never-ending *Poa annua* control process. Time will tell, but precision spraying is working well at Priddis Greens. Beebe also reports at least a 20-percent reduction in overall product usage as a result of using the GPS-guided sprayers, generating considerable savings that will more than pay for the lease of the two spray units.

West Region Agronomists:

Patrick J. Gross, regional director – pgross@usga.org

Larry W. Gilhuly, agronomist – lgilhuly@usga.org

Brian S. Whitlark, agronomist – bwhitlark@usga.org

[Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service.](#)

[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)