

Follow the Code

May I air my views on the interesting points raised in Kerran Daley's July article concerning worm control? Although I confess to being too young to remember the nightmare scene described, that of greenkeepers with handkerchiefs wrapped around their mouths walking through billowing clouds of lead arsenate, I can however describe the scene of a golf course built on heavy soil supporting more than its fair share of worms, i.e. playing surfaces which are the result of years of hard work being ruined almost overnight, of maintenance operations interrupted, golfers frustrated, and in some cases winter rules having to be introduced to allow the cleaning of golf balls on fairways – all of this can be very disheartening.

Perhaps if lead arsenate could have been researched and refined into a product that would have permitted its use today, with the help of a strict code of practice of course, or even perhaps with the issuing of a special licence to handle it, surely the ability to use such a product once in eight years, rather than applying today's products three or four times in one year, must have clear advantages.

Like Kerran, I agree that accidents can happen, but surely the more pesticide applications one now needs to make increases the risk of accidents. I also agree that protecting the environment is important and can only hope that the new chemicals marketed today (as a substitute for lead arsenate) do not in time show them to be a greater environmental problem, as they are having to be used more frequently and in far greater quantities.

The decision to kill worms in the soil is not one to be taken lightly, for the contribution they make to the soil structure is undisputed, but when a point is reached when a pesticide is needed, I for one would prefer a total control, one hit solution. This would then allow the greenkeeper time to choose the correct conditions for a safe application, rather than frequent applications at a time of the year when applying pesticide can be a major headache. The main point Kerran raised – and the point on which I would like to finish – is that careless greenkeepers abusing pesticides can give any product a bad reputation. Therefore, it is up to us all to follow the Pesticide Code of Practice, and if you haven't got a licence then it's about time you did!

GORDON J IRVINE

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Travers has a point

May I, the greenkeeper and professional of some 30 years at Leek Golf Club, offer further observations on the article "Greens Must Not Be Spared." To begin, I must agree with Mike

Travers on a number of points. Over the Christmas holidays we must accommodate at least 200 players each day if the weather permits. I am at the club at 7am each morning, getting everybody lined up and collecting green fees from members guests so that we can be away at first light! What a great time we have, with mince pies, sausage rolls and various malt whiskies to sample.

In the winter period we cut three separate holes on each of the eighteen, one on the green proper, one on the surround and one on the temporary green. The surrounds are very large, which encourages trolley-pullers to keep away from greens and surrounds, and in addition we push tee positions forward so that regular summer landing zones are rested.

The course closes itself if the weather is foul, additionally we ban trolleys when the ground is white over with frost or when frost is rising from the ground surface. When such conditions arise the flag is moved from the main or surround hole to the temporary green.

Finally, BIGGA and other greenkeepers associations alike, with education available to their members, are certainly moving the right way – forward! On the other hand, the poor PGA member cannot say the same and for his large subscription (in the Midlands it has risen by 40% in the last three years) the average PGA member gets very little from his organisation. Bear in mind, a few years ago most jobs were pro/greenkeeper run and remember that us old lads still have a great deal to offer. I myself am still young at heart, still learning, and still working 12-14 hours every day, seven days a week.

PETER STUBBS

Leek GC, Staffs (member of PGA, BIGGA and IoG)

Most important tool

Having been in greenkeeping for 15 years I've often mused over what is the most important piece of equipment in our profession. I'm sure there have often been discussions on this very subject. There are one or two that spring instantly to mind, e.g. could it be the amazing three-wheel truck that seems to carry out all those jobs required on the course, stopping short only of making sandwiches and coffee, or maybe the latest triplex that does 0-60 in under six seconds and cuts 18 greens inside the hour, with specially designer groomer things that control thatch build-up? I think not!

In my opinion, the most valuable tool for greenkeepers is the Sony Walkman. It is solely responsible for keeping me in the profession to this day and I am deeply indebted to the person who invented it.

I'm sure most of us have been in the situation when, as a gibbering wreck of an apprentice, we've waited to be told our duties for the day and hoped for a nice, cosy job – after all, it

is freezing outside with a chill factor of minus 12°, surely the boss will take this into account? Wrong!

Unfortunately, it is your turn to slit greens on the compact without a cab. The only thing that prevents you from being carted off to the 'funny farm' is your personal stereo. However, there are some important factors to consider before using the stereo, most important being your COSHH assessment, i.e. some forms of music have proved harmful to health and environment, and wavebands such as 'Take That, and 'East Seventeen' have been given a hazardous 'irritant' classification and for the sake of sanity must at all times be avoided.

Important guide-lines for purchase are: 100 watts per channel (to drown the sound of the diesel engine); mini headphones (can be hidden under woolly hats to fool golfers); an endless supply of batteries.

In January 1988 my worst nightmare came true. Working at Romsey GC I had six greens left to slit when my batteries died. Without spares and sans music, getting through the afternoon proved to be a real character-building experience, one I have no wish to repeat. As a precaution I now use re-chargables, with a back-up set always at the ready.

Let's hear it for the Sony Walkman, which should be awarded the Most Important Tool for Greenkeepers' Award 1993...

LINDSAY ANDERSON

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Mowrah memories

I have the clearest memory of using mowrah meal in the early sixties to control worms in fine turf. It was an unpleasant operation to carry out and caused much irritation to the operator as the material was very much like powdered pepper!

Talking to Jim Arthur and some greenkeepers earlier this year about early pesticide usage, we talked about who made mowrah meal, when it stopped being used and why. We were not sure of the facts so I asked the Pesticides Safety Directorate for some background information. To my amazement, the reply stated: "I have been unable to find any record of MAFF approved products containing mowrah meal!"

I would be very interested to hear from more 'mature' greenkeepers if they have any information or memories of using this product. Perhaps there may also be clubs that have kept old records of purchase orders going back 30 years, which would identify the manufacturer? Can anybody remember the correct application rate? I seem to recall that it was 6-8 oz. per square yard. We should not let our history to fade so quickly!

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