

Allow foxes to eradicate rabbits

In your article on rabbit control undertaken by the Middlesex based MG Wildlife you rightly refer to the conservation aspects of the work they carry out.

Rabbits are a major pest and unless the present population explosion is brought under control major damage to trees, shrubs and some meadow land plants can be expected.

The damage to greens, tees and fairways is also considerable and expensive to repair in both labour and materials.

It therefore came as a surprise to see in your article that this company which purports to control rabbits uses "silenced rifles to control animals such as foxes".

As foxes are a major predator of rabbits and other small rodents which can cause damage on a golf course it seems to me to be counter productive to shoot them unless the object of the exercise is only to promote shooting.

I feel that the eradication of rabbits which, despite the cuddly aspect of the little beast portrayed, is essential. We should encourage all predators including, and most importantly foxes.

I have for the last 40 years been responsible for the maintenance of two 18 holes and a 9 hole golf courses and would in no circumstances encourage the shooting of foxes.

I recommend to all your readers the need to eradicate rabbits wherever they are found and the encouragement of foxes.

DI Wilkinson

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■ Editor's Note. A spokesman for MG Wildlife said he agreed that foxes kept the rabbit population down and that they actively encouraged foxes unless they were, on the rare occasion, the only predator on the golf course.

Bad attitudes on display

I read the article on the London Golf Club's course in the April issue of *Greenkeeper International* with despair and incredulity. If it had been written on the basis that no one should try to emulate the methods adopted at the London, even in the extremely unlikely event of equalling their budgets and manpower it may have served a purpose. As it is, virtually every statement contradicts standard practices elsewhere. Criticisms of UK education are unwarranted, though certainly standards at some colleges need tightening up and this is being actively implemented.

The sad fact is that the London is an example of a tiny minority of megabuck courses, most of which have failed and most of the survivors continue as rich men's playthings or loss-making prestige symbols. It would be invidious to name the few exceptions.

As a final comment may I pass on the comment of one of my friends in the USGA who complimented British courses in having teams with largely qualified staff contrasting with American courses, where in too many cases one finds a graduate sitting behind a computer console, supported by ill-educated labourers capable of doing only their own specialised task.

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Don't knock the educators

I write to express my sincere concerns highlighted in your excellent article regarding the London Golf Club.

My concern is of criticisms levelled at NVQs and Modern Apprenticeships which are at present being introduced within our industry.

I have in the past shared with Steve Jones (Course Superintendent) the frustrations, disillusionment, despondency and even anger with the so-called system of education for Greenkeepers in this country for almost all of my 28 years in Greenkeeping.

I too have made attempts to introduce systems of training within individual Golf Clubs to compensate for the inadequacy of colleges and college lecturers.

However this approach cannot be right because: (a) We must have a standard across the whole industry as employers need to know who to employ according to what that person is capable of; and (b) An insular approach to training is extremely costly if it is to achieve acceptable results (in terms of time as well as money). I do not care how much your training budget is - an efficiently managed business cannot afford to throw time and money away.

Most of my frustrations have been allayed however since the Greenkeepers' Training Committee became involved in first NVQs and

just recently the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme.

Without going into any detail, NVQs are about standards on the golf course (not in a lecture room). The standards are set by your own industry and judged/assessed by your own industry, ie Golf Course Managers (on the golf course) who are qualified GTC trained Assessors and who are industry competent.

Modern Apprenticeships have been introduced for under 25's to provide a structure for NVQs so that progress can be monitored (using individual training for each apprentice) throughout the period of the apprenticeship and is again monitored by your own industry using industry competent Golf Course Managers as well as elected, approved training providers/centres.

Under the structure of Modern Apprenticeships the refunding of training costs is available to the employer on the Apprentice's achievement of the relevant level. The Government has had to do this to get employers to invest in training and I for one cannot miss out on money available for training. As a Course Manager I would not be doing my job properly if I ignored this fact.

I would therefore strongly urge any Course Manager or any Employer who shares the frustration of Steve Jones not to try to "go it alone". There is an excellent system in place governed by your own Authority on training - the Greenkeepers' Training Committee. Please contact them on 01347 838640. Once you know all the facts you can then make an informed decision.

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Golf Course Manager

Letchworth Golf Club

(mis)adventures of Gordon the Greenkeeper



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