

Unlike the famous monkeys who neither spoke, saw nor heard no evil, as Roland Taylor explains, using all your senses properly can be extremely beneficial...

Senses working overtime



In an age of high technology when computers play a major part in our lives it is easy to forget just how powerful our own human brain is. We can absorb data from a number of sources, analyse it, and make reasoned decisions in an instant. What has this got to do with golf course equipment you may ask? The answer is a great deal. By using our senses (sound, sight, feel, smell and taste) we can take on board information that our brains unscramble and come up with the best action, if any, that we need to take.



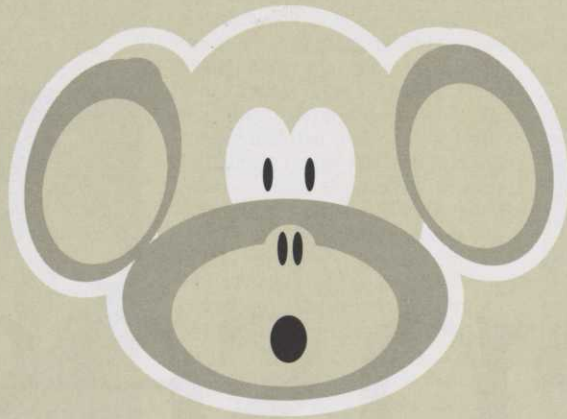
The grass-cutting season is now well under way and, for many, it means mowing from virtually dawn to dusk. In this situation it is easy to overlook a symptom on the mower that indicates something nasty is developing.



The engine fires first time, reels are spinning and drive is operational - no problems, let's go mowing. Hang on a minute, now is the time all the senses should be fully active and sending messages to the brain for analysis.

Senses

working overtime



SOUND

- as the song goes "listen to the rhythm of the beat".

When one works with a piece of equipment every day one gets familiar with the noise it makes, so any changes should be taken as a warning signal. It is those subtle alterations in the noise that need to be listened out for.

The engine

A normal engine will have a steady rhythm regardless of whether it is ticking over or under full power. A change in this indicates that something is not quite right. It may be that the fuel mixture is incorrect and this could be due to a number of factors:

- Old petrol is being used. (Petroleum companies change the composition of fuel to suit the time of year to suit the season.)
- Dirty or polluted fuel is in the system
- The spark plugs are dirty or incorrectly set.
- Clogged up air filters will change the air-to-fuel ratio and make an engine run richer and hotter.
- Cooling fins and radiator grilles may be blocked up with dried grass

thus causing the engine to run hot.

● Low oil levels mean poor lubrication, so friction creates heat buildup.

Any or all of these faults will mean an increase in fuel consumption, more pollutant being emitted into the atmosphere and a reduction in the machine's overall performance.

The machine

Two surfaces running at high speed with virtually no lubrication will make a different sound to when they are well oiled or greased.

The changes in reel noise indicate they require resetting. A reel might be damaged or have come off cut. Alternatively, it could be set too hard - this will not only affect the cut, it also places an extra stress on the mower's other components and excessive wear will take place.

Another noise to listen out for is rattling of guards. If securing clips or other fixings have become loose they will eventually break or come undone completely, with the result that the guard eventually falls off. There is always the chance that it will finish up in the cutting system, where it could do considerable damage.

Chain drives are always hidden under covers. If they become slack they are likely to slap against the casing and this is a certain indication that some adjustment is needed.

Transmission whine is another sound to keep an ear out for. It may mean that a top-up of a lubricant is required, but if it still persists or increases in volume then something is wrong.

SIGHT

By being ever watchful, you can identify areas on the machine that require some attention.

Oil patches on areas where a machine has stood overnight are clues that need to be investigated. It may be coming from the engine, transmission box or drive system.

Keep an eye out for seepage around hydraulic couplings and hoses chaffing against metal.

Grease oozing from a bearing might mean a seal has gone.

Black deposits around the exhaust outlet area, are an indication that the engine is not running correctly.

Check for a build-up of dry grass and dirt anywhere on the machine, especially areas that are designed to



keep the unit running at the correct temperature. These include, cooling fins on the engine and hydraulic system, air filters on the carburettor and radiators grilles, if fitted.

Watch out for loose guards, wiring, clip nuts and bolts.

Observe the quality of cut from each mowing unit.

Make sure there are no slack belts or chains.

Clean dirt around oil fillers and fuel caps.

Whilst cutting look out for foreign bodies in the grass such as people, animals, stones, golf balls and tees.

TOUCH

Excessive vibration is a sure sign things are not right. On a rotary, a blade may have been badly damaged or come off - this will require immediate attention.

Any area that is not normally hot needs checking out.

With the engine switched off, spin the reels to find out if they need re adjusting.

Test belt and chain tensions.

SMELL

Burning rubber - indicates a belt is overheating.

Fuel - could be leaking from a carburettor or fuel pipe.


Bonfire - a build-up of dried grass has been or is about to ignite.

Oil - A gasket might be leaking or there is shortage of oil.

TASTE

As far as the machine is concerned there are no areas where this is likely to be used. If you have done the job properly you can sit back and enjoy your sandwiches or lunchtime meal which will very likely taste excellent.

All this seems like a lot to take in, but in reality one should not become paranoid - most is common sense and comes naturally. It is just a question of being observant, using your senses and responding to something that is not quite right, thus reducing the chances of hassle at a later date.



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