

## YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

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### Taking Issue

I feel strongly that on behalf of the silent majority of good greenkeepers I must take issue over the article by Dr Kate Entwistle on "Fus" in the February issue, pages 37-39. There are far too many similarly misconceived articles on a wide majority of topics, summarised by "correct observation, incorrect deduction".

I do not take exception to her exposition of facts, notably that many potentially damaging fungi live happily on dead vegetation in all soils but if encouraged will attack, disfigure and even kill fine turf.

I do not agree, and most greenkeepers will not either, that "Fus" is primarily a winter (cold temperature) disease, or that, as she has stated elsewhere, that it is developing as a summer problem! It has, in all my half century of experience and for long before that, also been a summer problem!

There is an age old greenkeeping adage that "chronic fus is an infallible sign of bad greenkeeping". Partly this is because the incorrect management encourages *Poa annua* which is by far the most susceptible greens to be attacked (partly due to its soft sappy leaves). Nowhere in this article is this point mentioned, let alone emphasised.

The commonest fault of bad greenkeeping is over-feeding. The link between excessive quantities, of frequency of application and the incidence of disease is clearly shown by an R&A funded survey last year, with a big response from golf clubs of all types, status and financial standing.

This showed that 91% of all respondents used less than three tonnes of fertiliser per annum per 18 holes (21% well under one tonne). Few if any of these used autumn fertilisers. The amount of fungicide used annually related directly to fertiliser use. One club using 24 tonnes of fertiliser p.a also spent £24,000 on fungicide.

Frequency of spraying varied from fortnightly - often all year round - to nil) the last time that could be remembered in some cases was several years ago!) Perhaps the results could be published in GKI - they are freely available\*.

The deductions must be important. First, cost, which is very relevant in these days of the reduced profitability of golf. Second, due to often unjustifiable prohibitions and even more so to withdrawal of some fungicides by manufacturers because of reduced returns on smaller markets, we shall soon have no fungicides available other than sulphate of iron. Those with lush *Poa* greens and high feed and water input will have no defence against serious chronic "Fus" attacks.

In passing, there is no evidence that potash induces disease resistance - in fact even low levels will in time encourage *Poa* invasion and so disease.

My advice to avoid, other than ephemeral attacks under humid summer/autumn conditions, is to use nitrogen only (sparingly), stop in late July, treat ephemeral attack with iron promptly, cut down shading trees - and especially "stagnating" undergrowth - keep greens well aerated and dry, stop irrigation early (late August) and limit watering any way and avoid smothering as well as over-feeding.

In short, with sound sensible greenkeeping you will never get chronic "Fus" - but some sufferers may have some leeway to make up.

Meanwhile, it would be helpful if cologists gained more field experience and resisted the temptation of correctly identifying spores etc under a microscope but wrongly assuming that the fungus was causing the problem, thus encouraging sufferers to pollute by over use of fungicides, instead of adopting sensible greenkeeping preventative practice.

I would get less despondent if culprits would learn from well over a century of proven research and practice that austere natural greenkeeping really does work, but for lasting success we must achieve the impossible - educating today's golfer that green is not great - and that we play golf on fine turf not colour.

For independent corroboration log in to the R&A website [www.best.courseforgolf.org](http://www.best.courseforgolf.org)

J H Arthur, Honorary Member, Budleigh Salterton

\* The results of the survey were published in the May 2003 issue of the magazine

### Many Thanks

Having just returned from attending the GCSAA Conference & Exhibition in San Diego, I would like to register a big thank you, to everyone involved in making the visit possible. This may sound like a BAFTA acceptance speech, but please bear with me. I would like to thank Steven Bernhard for having the vision to continue to support the delegation, now in its fourth year.

Steven, together with Sam McLean, were excellent hosts. A big thank you must go to Kim Furnell, who "mothered" us all week, making sure that we were correctly dressed and keeping our hectic itinerary on the rails. Thanks to BIGGA for supporting the initiative and the members that gave up their time to assist in the selection process.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank the other nine delegates, friendships were forged that will last for a very long time. So, to Chunky, Young Burt, Dad, Irish, Warren "Don't mention the passport photo", Steve "Tea Total" Tierney, Terry "I must have an early night", Joe "I must go shopping", and Will "The Scribe", thanks guys, for a great week.

I will not go into any detail regarding the week as Will "the Scribe" will be doing that in next month's edition, suffice to say that we all came back more knowledgeable and would urge you all to enter, for a chance of attending the GCSAA Conference & Exhibition 2005. A great experience!

Paul Jenkins

### Sharpening Debate

Having spent in excess of 20 years in the groundcare industry, I have to say I personally agree wholeheartedly with the piece in the magazine a couple of months ago, about non contact, cylinder to bottom blade, grasscutting.

However, this is not a new concept. The practice of none contact mowing has been around for many years.

Although I am not a greenkeeper, but a mechanic/engineer for a large local authority, I have, for many years, adopted this method. Not only for golf courses, but also for roadside verges. This method works very well as quality work always shows up. Damage and downtimes are extremely minimal over machines which have been (spin) ground and set up with contact.

In order to achieve this none contact combination, you require a machine which will relief grind the cylinder spirals individually. This method was demonstrated, proved, and taught to me twenty three years ago.

I have, for many years, used a Hunter Juno grinder, which is probably the only true way to relief grind the cylinder correctly to achieve the razor edge necessary for none contact mowing.

I think that it is nice to see someone bringing this to the fore, as I am sure that like myself, many other people have been adopting this practice for a great many years.

Although we have recently purchased a Hunter Jupiter grinder, purely for capacity and spin, and now have the best of both worlds, I still tend to use the single blade relief method, especially where the machines are used in high profile, showpiece areas.

Mark Hesp, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council