

A QUICK GUIDE TO...

SUMMER IRRIGATION

After two wet summers, weather experts are predicting warm, dry conditions this season with some drought in the south. But are you ready to irrigate to keep your course in perfect condition? Robert Jackson shares his top tips for choosing a new system or getting the most from your existing one.



Budget well

Effective irrigation is a maintenance must, but many clubs persevere with problems. They call out Service Engineers time and again, accruing unnecessary labour costs as well as causing turf damage during hot, dry periods, until it becomes a real headache. Before you reach breaking point, weigh up the costs of growing annual service bills against budgeting for a new system. More often than not, budgeting for new costs less in the long-term compared to throwing good money after bad in the short-term.

Maximise efficiency and reduce waste

Investing in a brand new system is by far the best way to maximise efficiency and reduce waste. Advanced controllers and automatic flow management programmes allow you to water in millimetres instead of time. And, while nothing beats rainfall, the latest sprinkler and nozzle technology means we're getting closer to nature in terms of uniformity and applying water precisely where you want it.

'Future-proof' your system

The greatest mistake a club can make is to stump up the cash for a new system that leaves no room for expansion. A system designed to irrigate just greens is specified and costed accordingly. So if you later decide you want to expand this into a tees and fairways system it will not have the capacity to cope. You'll then be faced with

the unpleasant prospect of upgrading or replacing the mains infrastructure to cope with the additional flows and pressures. Discuss your needs with a consultant or contractor from the start in order to 'future-proof' your system. A good system will last up to 50 years if properly maintained and serviced, and should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs.

Refurbishment or Replacement?

Refurbishment rather than wholesale replacement of your irrigation system is also an option and can be very cost-effective. If you experience a decline in performance, or your system is approaching the end of its useful life, seek expert help from a consultant or contractor.

Check your sprinkler nozzles

Sprinkler nozzles are subject to wear, so adequate maintenance and periodic replacement can bring about a dramatic improvement in the overall efficiency of your system. Because they need to be replaced every few years, manufacturers are constantly updating and improving their design and function. This means new nozzles will work at the very best flow and pressure, whereas older nozzles will always become less uniform with age.

Did you know that, simply by renewing sprinkler nozzles, you can increase the efficiency of your system by up to 10% at

the right pressure and flow? With nozzles costing on average just £15 per head, this can be a highly cost-effective way of improving your system.

Look out for leaks and burst pipes

During a drought, look out for tell tale signs of leaks and burst pipes. A few years ago I visited a course suffering from sprinkler performance issues; when we arrived we noticed a green stripe running right down its mainline in stark contrast to some brown areas – a great indication that there was a problem! One of the best ways to establish if you've got a burst pipe is to perform a pressure test on the mains. Switch everything off and pressurise the mains network to see how long the pressure lasts in the system. If you have a burst then you'll see the pressure drop quickly.

Maintenance checks

Finally, it's no use investing in a new system or replacing component parts of an existing one if you're not performing proper maintenance. Daily and weekly checks should be a part of your routine. You should also ask your contractor to carry out an annual full system check.

For more information on Toro Irrigation Products, call distributor Lely UK on 01480 226848/226872, email irrigation.uk@lely.com or visit www.toro.com.