

20 courses to test new bio-control for mole crickets

NAPLES — After four years of testing in Alachua County pastureland by researchers with the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, "the most promising biological control agent for mole crickets we have ever had" is ready for field trials at 20 Florida golf courses.

"Everything looks extremely promising as far as finally having something we can brag about," said Bob Rehberg, chairman of the Florida Turfgrass Association's research awards committee, following an education session during the FGCSA's Poa Annua Classic weekend May 20-22.

What Rehberg and the FTGA are bragging about is an Uruguayan nematode which carries a bacterium "at least four times more virulent on the mole cricket than some of the other materials that have been pulled in from commercial organizations."

The microscopic worm crawls in the mole cricket's mouth, infects it with the lethal bacteria, and then crawls out before the insect dies "within one to several days," Rehberg said.

In IFAS' controlled study, the nematodes have remained in the soil four years after their release and their effect has been detected more than 10 miles from the original release point.

In that study on bahiagrass pastureland which, Rehberg pointed out, is "particu-



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FTGA's Bob Rehberg announces new bio-control for mole crickets at Poa Annua education session.

larly susceptible" to the dreaded root-eating pest, "the mole cricket populations... have decreased by about 95 percent and continue to decline as we continue to monitor.

"Grass and trees have recovered from mole cricket damage and mole crickets are no longer an economic problem in these pastures."

The nematode and its lethal bacterium are completely harmless to "all other biological systems," Rehberg said. "All tests indicate so far that it is very specific."

So now the FTGA, which funded the IFAS research by Dr. Grover Smart with a total of \$45,000 in grants, is going to let 20 members test the nematode on their golf courses.

"We're looking for 20 members who will pay \$8,000 each to participate in a two-year study," he said.

In a follow-up conversation one week after the Naples announcement, Rehberg said several FTGA members already had

expressed interest in the project.

"Undoubtedly we'll have more than 20 willing to participate," he said. "Compared to the alternatives, \$8,000 is practically free."

The problems in testing the nematode under field conditions have been not so much with the organism but with the "delivery system."

The laboratory technique for infecting the mole crickets is difficult, unpleasant and expensive.

Besides, Rehberg said, "IFAS is not equipped, nor is it in the business, to raise large amounts of any biological control agent."

The technique developed by the FTGA involves luring mole crickets to traps filled with nematode-infested sand and then dumping the infected mole crickets on the golf course "where they can go infect other mole crickets before they die," Rehberg said.

"It may take a couple years to get them out there in sufficient numbers to really show you a difference," he said, "but we think it will happen."

Participants in the test will be selected in such a way as to guarantee a variety of soil and climatic conditions. They will attend a seminar in Gainesville.

Old Marsh lands '92 USGA Women's Mid-Amateur

FAR HILLS, N. J. — Dennis Weber became the latest Florida superintendent to learn his work will be placed in the national spotlight when the USGA announced March 22 that the Old Marsh

(Please see OLD MARSH, page 16)

SUMMER SPOTLIGHT

Superintendents who will test the champions

July 27-30 — **Jim Branstrom**, Palm Beach Polo & CC, West Palm Beach. Florida Open.

Aug. 19-20 — **Frank Sbarro**, Marsh Landing and **Kim He-mauer**, Oakbridge at Sawgrass, Ponte Vedra. FSGA Team Championship.

Aug. 22-25 — **Greg Pheneger**, PGA National GC, Palm Beach Gardens. PGA Junior Championship.

Sept. 28-Oct. 1 — **Robert Giehls**, Killearn CC, Tallahassee. PGA Tour Centel Classic.

Sept. 30-Oct. 1 — **Bob Ellis**, Lake Region Y&CC, Winter Haven. FSGA Senior Four-Ball Championship.

Oct. 5-8 — **Steve Schroeder**, Mayacoo Lakes CC, West Palm Beach. FSGA Mid-Amateur Championship.

Oct. 13-16 — **Larry Kamphaus**, Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista. Oldsmobile Scramble Finals.

Oct. 18-21 — **Larry Kamphaus**, Walt Disney World, Lake Buena Vista. PGA Tour Disney/Olds Classic.