

From the Beltway to the Fairway



Regulators Get Real-World View of Responsible Environmental Management

By Kyle D. Sweet, CGCS

On March 30, the Old Collier Golf Club hosted the annual 2009 Regulatory Tour where the EPA, USDA, Florida Farm Bureau and the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association were represented.

This long-standing annual tour of Florida agriculture operations was organized by Mike Aerts, Florida Fruit and Vegetable director of marketing and membership; Dan Botts, vice president of industry resources; and Tim Hiers, maintenance director of the Old Collier Golf Club.

Old Collier has served as the first stop for the group's weeklong tour for the past five or six years after the FGCSA was invited to help host the tour since it is a convenient stop near the Southwest Florida International Airport in Ft. Myers. The tour also includes visits to Lee County Mosquito Control and South Florida production

Tim Hiers (yellow shirt) explains golf maintenance practices during one of many stops on the Old Collier course during the March 2009 Regulator Tour. Photo by Mike Aerts.

facilities for cattle, citrus, sugar cane and other row crops, sod and ornamentals.

Would it surprise you that many of the participants have never been on a golf course?

Each year the tour provides the opportunity to introduce a new group of lawmakers and regulators to the golf course industry at the ground level. Touring the entire group through the golf course on golf carts is by far the best way for them to learn what we do as managers and for them to gain an understanding of the challenges that superintendents face each day.

Besides, the carts are fun and who doesn't like spending a March afternoon in the fresh air on a golf course? Sunglasses, hats and wide open views replace the office attire and indoor atmosphere on a first introduction for many into our world of golf course management.

Superintendents are dedicated to preservation and conservation of our properties. How we utilize chosen chemicals with regard to frequency, thresholds and product decision-making is very important to convey to those who make the rules.

Hiers and other South Florida superintendents have taken the time to educate these decision-makers on not only pesticide issues, but on other

topics such as fertility, irrigation water use, wildlife management, energy conservation and maintenance facility operations.

Combined, this is an extensive list and an integral part of being a superintendent in today's times. Once presented with this information, the group gains an incredible understanding of the Old Collier operation and, in turn, an understanding of the golf course industry trends and abilities to maintain high level course conditioning while not only protecting habitats, but in many cases enhancing them.

All of this work is capped with a putting contest and dinner to wrap up the visit. By day's end, industry professionals have answered many questions and provided much-needed insight to the tour participants.

Florida superintendents should be thankful that this effort is made each March, undoubtedly going a long way toward protecting the practices that we know are crucial to our valuable profession.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The passenger golf carts rented by the FGCSA for the regulator tour are also used by Old Collier for some public outreach and education by hosting annual tours for 5th graders from a nearby elementary school.



Remnant grasses in old collars can contaminate new greens if not taken care of quickly.
Photo by Todd Lowe.

Do Your Greens Have 'Ring Around the Collar?'

By Todd Lowe

Do you remember the old Woolite® commercial, about the housewife who tries to remove the “ring around the collar” from her husband’s dress shirts? The woman remains upset and frustrated until a little detergent is applied to remove the stain and clean the shirt. “Stains” can also occur on golf course putting greens in the form of weedy grasses, and this is extremely frustrating for golf course superintendents. While no amount of Woolite® can be applied to clean the

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'Ring Around the Collar'

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greens, there are a few steps to take to improve turf quality and ensure such instances do not occur.

I have noticed a particular situation over the past few years following putting green renovation or regrassing, where a different strain of bermudagrass encroaches onto the putting green perimeters. This grass is visibly different from both the new grass and Tifway that exists on most of the collars. The “stain” is what I refer to as remnant grass, as it was a grass that most likely existed on the previous putting greens and slowly encroached into the collars. Unlike Tifway bermudagrass that naturally exists in roughs, remnant grass is adapted to low mowing and can easily creep back onto the new greens shortly after renovation.

Most standard putting green regrassings or renovations include locating putting green perimeters, removing the old grass/soil from the

putting surfaces, fumigating the new mix, and planting new bermudagrass sprigs. Coarse-textured bermudagrasses that exist in golf course roughs can slowly encroach onto golf course putting greens over time but are relegated to perimeters, as they scalp when mowed low. However, remnant grass can quickly encroach from the putting green collars onto the new putting surfaces, as they thrive under low mowing.

Perimeter contamination from encroachment of any grass is a nuisance; but, once remnant grass establishes into putting green perimeters it can quickly spread throughout the green interiors. New plantlets are most likely dispersed through vertical mowing and/or core aeration. In each case that I have observed remnant contamination, hundreds of small patches were dispersed throughout the putting greens within five or six years after regrassing.

If you have ring around the collar, deal with it quickly and do not allow it a chance to spread. Remove the

contaminant physically with a sod cutter or a hex plugger and replace it with putting green turf. Ideally, your golf course has a nursery green to plug out contaminated areas, but commercial sod will also work. If the encroachment cannot be dealt with, it might be advised to simply bring in the putting green perimeters slightly through mowing so that the chance of widespread contamination from cultivation practices is reduced.

Avoid ring around the collar altogether by killing and removing the existing collars during renovation and fumigating both putting surfaces and collars prior to regrassing. Not only will this practice improve genetic purity but will also kill plant-parasitic nematodes that may exist within putting green collars. Nematodes can quickly invade putting green perimeters and literally suck the life from the turf. The extra fumigation and grass required for this practice will cost more initially, but will save a lot of money (and perhaps your job) in the long run.



The shop tour through Seminole County was open to equipment technicians, superintendents and assistants. Photo by Frank Eckert

Bus was Full for Dealers' 2009 Central Florida Shop Tour

By Frank Eckert

The 4th Annual Central Florida Shop tour March 18 was a tremendous success. The event is sponsored by three area turf equipment dealers— Coastal Equipment Systems (John Deere), Wesco Turf (Toro), and Golf Ventures (Jacobsen).

This year the focus was in Seminole County where we visited The Legacy Club at Alauqua Lakes (John Deere), Interlachen Country Club (Jacobsen) and Wesco's (Toro)

Facility in Lake Mary. Equipment and shop presentations were given by principals at each venue with additional comments and Q&A sessions by the host superintendents and mechanics.

Attendance is open to all equipment technicians, superintendents and assistants on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendance was unusually strong this year and the charter bus was full.

Hey this thing is beginning to catch on!