

# Superintendents tackle mole crickets in a variety of ways

By HAL PHILLIPS

In the words of one superintendent, who requested anonymity, "If you want to beat the mole cricket, you've got to think like a mole cricket." If we accept that no two bands of mole crickets are the same, then it would follow that no two approaches are the same either.

Some believe applications must be made by the cover of nightfall. Others rely on the moon for timing, while an increasing number swear by the nematode approach.

One thing is indisputable: Mole crickets are the most damaging pest in the Southeast and a panacea has not yet been found.

What follows is a sampling of anti-cricket techniques gathered from Florida superintendents.

**Chip Fowkes**, Emerald Dunes Golf Club, West Palm Beach: We've found the key to getting rid of mole crickets is scouting, scouting, scouting," said Fowkes. "The key is knowing where they're gonna be and where. I even have a crazy assistant who cuts them open and looks for eggs. If we find eggs, we know we have a couple of weeks to really go after them.

"We use Crusade (Lesco) for our major hit and follow the label exactly. You have to water the stuff in with a half-inch of water — and sometimes you don't realize how much a half-inch really is. We follow up with Orthene (Valent) or Pageant (DowElanco). We haven't used Ofthanol (Miles) for a couple of years, and we may use it this year.

"It all depends on your tolerance level. I don't mind having mole crickets in my rough. In my rough I use a mild bait. It's slower acting, but we accept a certain level in the rough. It doesn't disrupt anything."

**Tim Hiers**, Collier's Reserve, Naples — Hiers hasn't met the enemy in more than a year, he has some time-tested beliefs.

"With a mole cricket, there's a lot of room for guess-work," said Hiers, "You may have a great kill one day and do the same thing the next day, and nothing happens. But I believe you must get them when they're small. Soapy applications tend to bring them to the surface, and you can tell when there's been a big hatch.

"The atmosphere must be right. If it's dry or cold, it's no good — the crickets are deeper in the soil and the transposition isn't optimal. Applications should come after irrigation and at night. At night the wind is down, the animal activity is down, and the crickets are more active."

Hiers said one of his best kills came by accident. He spread an application one day simply to dispose of the bag. It had been cold four nights in a row, so the crickets hadn't eaten in days. It warmed up the night after the application and — presto! — a great kill.

**Mark Jarrell**, Palm Beach National G&CC, Lake Worth — "What I've done in the past is apply Oftanol in late May/early June,

followed up spot treating with Orthine," said Jarrell. "But if you use Oftanol more than one year in a row, it loses its effectiveness.

"This past year, I used Pageant, a dursban product — just spot treatment. It worked pretty well, but we still have mole cricket activity out there right now."

Nematodes? "Some people think it reduces the levels," he said, "but it didn't take them all out. If you can live with some mole cricket activity, that may be

a good course of action."

Any tips? "I think everybody has probably tried to spray late in the evening. If you put out Orthine in the morning, you get photodegradation. Some guys take it to extremes — because they can burrow two feet down, if you get a lot of rain, they come up to the surface."

**Greg Plotner**, Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club: "We experimented with biological controls briefly last year and we

haven't formulated a plan of attack for next year," said Plotner. "We'll probably work with them this summer. They work, but we don't know whether to put all our bang into that buck. It can be expensive.

"My best results were achieved by using Orthine, and it'll be in my program this summer," added Plotner, who uses a 1 percent Dursban, weatherized bait. "We know that right here in central Florida, the hatch will be the second week in May — so our

application will be the first or second week in June. If we can get a good knockdown that week, we can treat hot spots as need be.

"We definitely use the moon cycles, and we plan our baiting procedures around the moon cycle. We get a better kill. People laugh but it works.

"If you've done a good job, you shouldn't have much of a problem January through March. We're awfully clean right now, so we must have done a good job."

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