

## IMPACT ON THE BUSINESS

### Living on the edge

An increase in dollar spot pressure created some challenges at Statesville (N.C.) Country Club. **BY MARISA PALMIERI**

Statesville (N.C.) Country Club's superintendent Fenn Clarke has been dealing with dollar spot on bentgrass greens for the last year. Above average rainfall and cooler temperatures are partly to blame. The area received 40 inches of rain from January to May – an amount equivalent to the typical annual rainfall.

Clarke, who's been at the 18-hole, private club for 17 years, has never had much trouble controlling dollar spot in the past, but over the last year it's been tough and he worries about resistance.

Starting last year, he was spraying in two- to three-week intervals, but only saw 10 days of control before dollar spot would reappear.

"Most fungicide labels say the control lasts 14 to 28 days depending on the rate," he says.

The 18th green was in horrible condition, Clarke says. That resulted in the need for frequent monitoring, increased fungicide use and some concern by the membership.

After winter came and the bentgrass never grew vigorously enough to fill in the dollar spot damage, Clarke planned to begin applying fungicides preventively early in the spring.

Beginning in March, Clarke sprayed propiconazole.

"It's a powerful fungicide – superintendents are sometimes hesitant to spray it in the middle of the summer," he says. "But I was told it's what I need to control dollar spot. We sprayed the max rate on the label, and in less than 10 days I had active dollar spot again.

"Then I started getting worried about resistance," he says.

After researching various chemicals and trying a few more fungicides, Clarke discovered Tourney (metconazole) and received a free sample of about \$900 worth of product, or about an application and a half.

"We applied it and immediately stopped the dollar spot," he says. "At 10 days I still had good control. To be honest, I didn't truly test the Tourney because I never even gave the dollar spot a chance to come back."

After the Tourney, Clarke began a rotation including chlorothalonil and Curalan (vinclozolin).

Despite having to monitor the dollar spot on greens 16 and 11 every 10 days, Clarke is happy with the program.

"The No. 18 green has completely filled in and is one of the most beautiful greens on the golf course," he says, noting he was recently recognized after the member-member tournament for "saving the day."

"The dollar spot has been on 16 and 11 and it still kind of lives on the edge and waits for the

opportunity to grow again," he says. "But this summer, I've just bombarded it with fungicides every 10 to 14 days. We're already seeing improvement, so I'm hoping after this summer I can get back on a schedule of every three to four weeks."

The downside to the intense dollar spot control program has been the increased spending, says Clarke who maintains the golf course with a \$500,000 budget.

"I'm spending more because I've had to go on a 10- to 14-day schedule when I planned to go on a 14- to 21-day schedule," he says. "I budgeted \$30,000, but I'm probably going to spend close to \$40,000."

The biggest relief of all for Clarke was discovering that resistance isn't his problem.

"I found out that my dollar spot isn't resistant, it's just that once I got it, it was hard to eradicate so I had to increase my program." **GCI**

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