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DOCUMENTING WHAT YOU SEE

I recently finished my 17th and final internship visit; a one-day trip to the West Coast where I spent more time on the plane than I did in California. These trips have been ongoing since mid-May and during this two-month period, I've been able to see first-hand some of the problems superintendents have been dealing with.

EARLY IN THE SEASON. My first trip took me south to North Carolina where things were really just getting going. The obvious diseases like spring dead spot and large patch were apparent. However, an unusual problem that was observed on at least one course was caused by an early spring green up of the warm-season grasses followed by a few hard frosts. The limited rooting caused some serious damage to the newly emerging roots and setback the turf into the season.

In many areas where cool-season grasses are grown, the spring was about 3 to 4 weeks ahead of schedule and the *Poa* jumped early making seedhead control difficult. As for diseases, red thread was as about as severe as I've ever seen it and many courses were dealing with it. In fact, some courses had it so badly significant damage to the fairways occurred. Dollar spot was also early and although it came on fast, it fizzled in many areas until later in the season.

DISEASES HITTING THEIR STRIDE. June was met with a screeching halt to disease activity. Trips around the Philadelphia, New York, New England, Canada and Chicago were, however, met with different biotic and abiotic challenges. Although several diseases like brown ring patch, dollar spot, anthracnose and that nagging red thread were causing some minor problems, Mother Nature was the big story.

On the East Coast, we were getting

some decent rains, which seemed to come in a timely and appropriate manner. In the Midwest, however, the burnt and dried-out grass could be seen from the airplane's window seat. These conditions were keeping diseases to a minimum, but keeping up with wilt and drought became difficult. Add the record-breaking heat and supers had their hands full.

BACK ON THE HOMEFRONT. During my routine absence from the Penn State campus (trust me, it was a good time to be away), diseases started to ramp up in our test plots. Anthracnose

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became so severe our untreated plots were nearly destroyed. Despite its intense pressure, we saw excellent disease suppression when rotational programs of effective fungicides were utilized. Other diseases, however, continued to progress slowly with little fanfare.

HEADING ABROAD. Into July, conferences and an internship visit took me to Europe and different issues. The UK weather had been miserable all spring and continued during my trip. Temperatures hovered in the 50's and rain seemed continuous. Red thread was probably the most problematic for them with fairy ring a close second.

FINAL ROUND OF VISITS. It wasn't until returning from the UK where things really heated up in our lab and around the region. Samples started arriving daily and diseases around the research facility increased, as well. Dollar spot

was a major problem, and although we have many options, one misplaced application – usually with a fungicide where resistance is an issue – and the control breaks down quickly. In addition to the usual suspects, summer patch was severe and thatch collapse, southern blight, and fairy ring made rare and/or impressive appearances.

What lies ahead? Don't let your guard down. This is the perfect time to reflect on what actually happened this year in terms of pest pressure, what worked and what didn't, and what changed in your program that may have influenced activity.

Now and into September is a good time to fill in the timeline of what happened at your course this season. Although I have been fortunate enough to see a wide range of problems, these issues aren't the same for everyone.

Basic recordkeeping principles are an essential ingredient when it comes to planning for next year. In reviewing pest-control programs, it is important to know the major problems at a particular golf course and even within specific areas of the course.

Don't rely on your memory when it comes to building next year's program. Consider the specific issues dealt with this year, the conditions surrounding those issues, and past historical data to "fine tune" rather than radically change your program year after year. These small adjustments may be the difference between a successful season and one you wish you could forget. **GCI**