

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Golfers spending, NGF says

A new National Golf Foundation (NGF) report signals that the downturn in the economy and the cratering stock market hasn't affected the way golf consumers spend their money.

The study, "The Spending Report: Sizing the Golf Consumer Marketplace," reports that consumer spending totaled more than \$23 billion in 2001, up 2.9 percent over the past two years.

Golfers spent \$26 billion on travel to play their favorite courses in 2001.

As a result of economic conditions of 2001, the NGF continues to monitor the spending habits of golfers in 2002, and will release a new report examining spending next April.

Lesco selling plants

Lesco plans to sell its Novex plant in Disputanta, Va., and its blending plant in Stockton, Calif. The company said it wants to source Novex from the eventual buyer of the Virginia plant and the blended fertilizer for its West Coast sales facilities from retained Lesco blending facilities or the eventual buyer of the Stockton plant.

"Novex is an excellent product for golf course greens and tees," said Michael P. DiMino, Lesco's president and CEO. "However, the Novex plant capacity is far greater than we need for our customer demand. We are looking for a buyer who can supply Novex to us and then use the remaining capacity in markets that are not competitive with Lesco's U.S. golf and professional lawncare markets."

Lesco announced that sales for the second quarter, excluding some charges,

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About That Fall Fungicide Application

IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT, KEEP IN MIND IT'S ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLICATIONS OF THE YEAR

By Ed Vandenberg

Fall fungicide applications are some of the most important applications of the year. They keep turf disease-free throughout the winter when colder weather in some regions makes applying chemicals nearly impossible. With winter weather and cool-season turf disease working together to damage a course, superintendents need to get the most out of their late-season turf management practices.

Snow-cover, high moisture and low temperatures will weaken turf, providing ideal conditions for the spread of turf disease. By the time weather improves, damage from disease outbreaks may be widespread.

Gray and pink snow mold are the most widespread of the cool-season diseases and are main contributors to winter turf injury. Heavy snow cover prior to turf hardening-off increases moisture in the soil, providing ideal conditions for snow mold development.

Pink snow mold will appear during cool, wet weather, with temperatures ranging from 30 degrees F to 60 degrees F. Snow cover is not required for its appearance, but it does provide favorable conditions for dis-



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Snow molds are the most widespread diseases to afflict cool-season turf and are major contributors to winter turf injury.

ease development. Pink snow mold produces small (less than 6 inches across), round spots on the turf. The pink tint that gives the disease its name is most noticeable during the early morning.

Gray snow mold is caused by two species of fungi that thrive when moisture is plentiful (particularly during prolonged periods of snow cover). The disease is particularly common after snowfall on unfrozen ground. Gray snow mold can create significant damage in locations where snow cover has lasted three months or more. Damaged turf will have a grayish-

white appearance with distinctive black sclerotia visible on vegetation after thawing.

Cool-season pythium will affect turf on multiple levels. The turf-quality effects of a pythium outbreak are visible longer than the aesthetic effects. On the surface, cool-season pythium outbreaks appear as small patches of water-soaked slimy grass that shrivel and fade from green to light brown.

Cool-season pythium root rot is difficult to recognize and often mistaken for other diseases. It causes stunted growth and severe rotting of turf roots. Turf exhibits slower, stunted growth and thinning, even after fungicide treatment.

Basal rot and foliar blight anthracnose thrive on weakened turf. Basal rot, the more prolific of the two, first appears in March, but is active through November on *Poa annua* and creeping bentgrass. First signs of infection include irregular patches of orange-to-yellowing turf (also known as “winter anthracnose”). Later, infected plants collapse, looking like bacterial wilt. Because basal rot is difficult to detect in early stages, turf will ultimately die once the disease is visible.

Harsh winter weather will often cause as much turf injury as will disease outbreaks. The overall turf quality decline caused by winter stresses — collectively known as winterkill — can be visible months after the arrival of warmer weather.

There are several cultural practices superintendents can adopt in autumn to prevent winter disease outbreaks. These practices include avoiding heavy nitrogen applications late in the season, mowing fairways late to reduce canopy buildup, improving drainage, increasing aeration and improving sunlight exposure where feasible.

Once winter has arrived, superintendents can continue to maintain their course to prevent the appearance of disease. Large drifts of snow can be avoided using snow fences and landscape plantings, and restricting walking and common snow sports on important turf areas can reduce compaction.

While these practices will reduce the chance of winter disease from appearing, the best measure a superintendent can take is to develop a preventative fungicide program on important turf areas, especially those that are susceptible to snow mold every year.

The window of opportunity to apply fungicides late in the season can be short, depending on the timing and severity of cooler weather. Therefore, fungicide applications need to perform multiple functions, providing control of winter disease while leaving turf better prepared for the winter weather as well as early spring play. This spectrum of control can be achieved by making applications of a combination of fungicide chemistries. Incorporating different chemistries into regular fungicide applications is necessary to reduce the risk of resistance.

Ed Vandenberg is a field development representative for Bayer Environmental Science-North America and works throughout the Midwest.

Quotable

“I was born on a golf course, but the only opportunity I had to use that golf course was to ride a steel-wheel tractor while cutting the fairways when I was 6 years old. The tractor I drove had to be cranked [to be started]. I remember my father saying to me, ‘Stay away from that crank, boy.’ I said, ‘Pap, let me crank that tractor.’ And he said, ‘You’ll get knocked on your (@#\$).’ ”

— Arnold Palmer, reminiscing about working with his father, who was superintendent of Latrobe (Pa.) CC

“I can’t believe we’re still fighting this stuff — racism, gender equality or whatever. But that’s life, I guess. It’s not going to change overnight, but hopefully, in the coming years, it will change.”

— Juli Inkster, LPGA golfer and U.S. Open Champion (Associated Press)

“It is really going to be beautiful. This is Elvis’ dream ranch.”

— Pro golfer and Presley fan John Daly on his plans to build a King-themed resort with two golf courses in Memphis (Reuters)



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTS