

# Off The Fringe

NEWS WITH A HOOK

## Business briefs

### Course revenues remain flat in 2002

It was another rough year for the golf industry in 2002, with rounds down and revenues remaining flat, according to the latest National Golf Foundation (NGF) study.

The findings, compiled in January from 2,191 golf facilities nationwide, indicated that rounds dropped 3 percent compared to 2001, and total revenues remained essentially flat, increasing only .9 percent.

"The decrease in rounds was expected," says NGF President Joe Beditz. "Lack of growth in the number of golfers continues to inhibit any material growth in rounds played or facility revenues, making facility owners and operators vulnerable to increased competition and the poor economy."

The NGF study defines rounds revenue as the sum of green fees, guest fees, golf car rentals, annual dues and trail fees.

### USGA honors former agronomist

James M. Latham of Deltona, Fla., who was actively involved on the USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Committee from 1995-2002, received the organization's USGA's Piper and Oakley Award for his "meritorious service to the USGA Green Section and the game of golf by a volunteer."

Latham worked as USGA Green Section agronomist from 1956 through 1960, and from 1984 to 1994. In between, he worked for 25 years with the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, helping to promote one of the nation's first businesses designed to recycle waste products into landscape fertilizers.

### Talkin' turf disease at Bayer event

Forty university researchers and plant pathologists recently attended the 10th annual Turfgrass Disease Seminar, sponsored by

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## Guarding Over Grubs

WEATHER PATTERNS LAST YEAR  
WILL AFFECT GRUB  
POPULATIONS THIS YEAR

By Larry Aylward, Editor

**G**rubs can be predictable. They often show up at the same location over and over. But they can also be as unpredictable from year to year as the Dow Jones Industrial Average is from day to day.

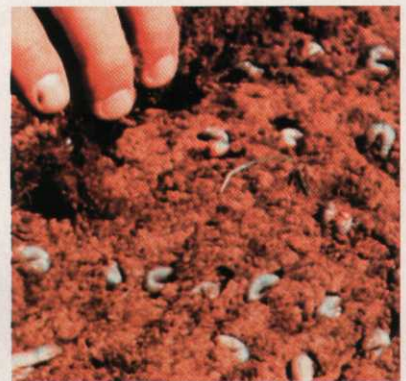
"It's funny how every year is different with grubs," says Chuck Silcox, Bayer Environmental Science's product development manager for insecticides in the turf and ornamental markets. "Every year [superintendents] deal with something new [from grubs]."

Grubs are high on superintendents' pest priority list.

"Grub control is probably second to crabgrass control in the minds of superintendents," says John Price, senior technical sales representative in the mid-American region for Dow AgroSciences.

Superintendents in the Midwest, East and parts of the South know the common turfgrass grubs as Japanese beetles, Asiatic garden beetles, European chafers, Green June beetles and Oriental beetles.

How pestering can the beetles be? Last year, Japanese beetle grubs appeared unexpectedly on several golf



**Don't be in a hurry to treat for grubs without doing an adequate site survey.**

courses in the late summer because of the drought. The female beetles delayed laying their eggs until they found moist turf to lay them, and the beetles found that moist turf on golf courses. "They laid their eggs as late as early September, and all of the sudden superintendents were dealing with a grub infestation they didn't typically have that time of year," Silcox says.

The drought, which affected about half the country last year, will have an impact on grub activity on golf courses throughout the nation this year, experts agree.

The wild card in all of this is how much superintendents irrigated their courses during the drought. If superintendents didn't irrigate their courses' fairways during the drought and let them go dormant, they might not have a problem with severe outbreaks. But superintendents who did irrigate may experience infestations of grubs on their courses. "Irrigated turf is

sometimes like a magnet for grubs," Silcox says.

Even if a superintendent is only irrigating a course's fairways to keep them a little moist during a water restriction, the course could have grub problems, says Pat Vittum, a professor of entomology at the University of Massachusetts.

"The turf doesn't have to be super moist," she says. "[Irrigation] only has to be at a level where the turf isn't wilting."

The past winter's fierce cold in the Midwest and East will have an impact on grub activity, experts say. Dave Ross, technical manager for Syngenta Professional Products, expects grub populations to be lower because of the harsh winter. "Adult emergence in the early spring will probably be a little reduced in some of those colder areas," he says.

But Silcox notes that heavy snowfall, which many parts of the Midwest and East also experienced, could improve

## Waiting for Meridian

What's up with Meridian, the new insecticide from Syngenta Professional Products? It was reported three years ago that Meridian was "nearing release."

But like a lot of pesticides, Meridian has been hung up in the EPA registration process in light of the Food Quality and Protection Act. Meridian contains the active ingredient thiamethoxam that will control many chewing and sucking insects, including grubs, at low use rates.

Among the holdups in the registration process is that EPA asked Syngenta to provide more data about the application rates of Meridian, according to Coby Long, Syngenta's insecticide brand manager.

"It has been disappointing for us, but we realize as a manufacturer that we're committed to working with EPA to ensure public safety," Long said.

If everything goes according to schedule within the review process, expect to see Meridian for sale late next year or in early 2005, according to Long.

— Larry Aylward, Editor

the chance of grubs' winter survival. "It's a lot more insulating under a foot of snow than it would be if it was 0 degrees F and there was no snow," he says.

For that reason, certified superintendent Joe Baidy, director of golf courses and grounds for Turning Stone Casino Resort in Verona, N.Y., won't be surprised if there's increased grub activity this spring and summer.

"We had snow but the ground did

not freeze under the snow, which could definitely support grub activity," says Baidy, a veteran superintendent of 37 years.

Even when the ground freezes, certified superintendent Tom Athy is impressed how grubs manage to stay alive.

"They are resilient little pests," says Athy, director of grounds for Omaha

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the Bayer Environmental Science/Chipco Professional Products Group in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., recently to talk about basal rot anthracnose management, bacterial wilt of *Poa annua*, silicon and gray leaf spot in St. Augustinegrass and other diseases. Just as important, they talked about designing fungicide programs for tees, greens and fairways to control the diseases.

"The meeting is designed as a noncommercial summit, providing researchers with an unbiased forum to discuss their research with colleagues," said Eric Kalasz, brand manager of fungicides for Bayer Environmental Science. "This seminar generates a lot of discussion and ideas each year."

### **Ex-Nicklaus executives face charges**

Two former executives of Paragon Construction International, an obsolete construction company owned by Jack Nicklaus' Golden Bear Golf, are facing federal securities fraud charges, according to a report. Christopher Curbello and John R. Boyd face up to 35 years in prison and a \$3.25 million fine if convicted of falsifying records to hide losses.

### **Textron celebrates feat**

Textron was handing out the wrist watches March 12 to proud employees of its Jacobsen's Charlotte manufacturing facility. The employees received the 2003 Textron Award of Merit in recognition of their achieving 1 million hours of operation without a lost-time injury. "This achievement is truly significant when one considers the core nature of our business — building and assembling precision, high-speed turf cutting and aeration equipment, and spare parts," said Jason Kravik, director of environmental health & safety for Jacobsen.

The Charlotte plant manufactures precision turf-care equipment for the golf course and sports-field markets. Jacobsen also announced that the Environmental Management System of the Charlotte Manufacturing Facility had achieved ISO 14001 certification. The ISO 14001 standard — often referred to as the "green" standard — defines the specific requirements for a comprehensive Environmental Management System.

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(Neb.) CC. "When there's cold temperatures and the frost goes deep into the soil, they seem to be mobile enough to move below it."

Joe DiPaola, golf market manager for Syngenta, notes that soil temperatures are much cooler this spring because of the cold winter, and grub development is likely to be delayed. DiPaola advises superintendents to monitor soil temperatures and be on the lookout for outbreaks. (Syngenta provides a convenient online resource — [www.greencastonline.com](http://www.greencastonline.com) — for doing this, he notes.)

The first grubs of the spring could be European chafers, which are active in Northeast states including Massachusetts and Rhode Island as well as near the shores of the Great Lakes.

"One distinction with the European chafer is that it becomes active earlier in the spring and stays more active in fall," Silcox says. "It's typically the first grub doing damage in the spring."

Vittum says she's concerned about increased populations of European chafers this year because of last year's drought and the fact that European chafers handle the cold better than other grubs.

"European chafers favor dry conditions, and we certainly had that last year [in the Northeast]," Vittum says. "They're also more cold-tolerant, so I'm sure they're untouched by the winter we just had."

Silcox says the European chafer and the Oriental beetle have both expanded their ranges. Silcox adds that he's surprised how fast the Oriental beetle has expanded its range, noting it has been discovered as far south as Atlanta.

DiPaola stresses that superintendents need to discover what type of grubs are intruding on their golf courses. The type will influence what kind of insecticides they apply, as well as application rates.

If you had grubs last year, you'll probably have them this year, Dow's

Price adds. He advises superintendents to monitor grubs' flights. When they fly, which could be around now (early May), apply an insecticide within a week, Price says.

Speaking of insecticides, make sure to apply them appropriately, Athy suggests.

"Grubs are one of the easiest pests to control," he says. "But if you don't get them, they can be a serious problem. If you screw up your application, they'll eat your course alive, and you won't know it until it's too late."

The key is to ensure that the insecticide you're using ends up in the soil, not in the thatch layer. It can't kill the grubs if it doesn't reach the soil where they're feeding.

"Start watering it in as soon as it's on the plant," Athy says. "Then it doesn't have the opportunity to dry on the leaves."

Superintendents also have to know how long to irrigate after the application. "Some think a 15- or 20-minute set will get it down through the thatch, but it might take longer than that," Athy adds.

Another key in dealing with grubs: Don't be in a hurry to treat for them without doing an adequate site survey. Eileen Buss, an assistant professor with the University of Florida's entomology and nematology department, advises superintendents to step back and establish the need to treat. That means to establish how many grubs are in the turf and to assess the level of damage to the turf. A healthy stand of turf can survive as many as 20 chafers per square foot. For green June beetles, three to five per square foot merits a spray.

Buss says the newest turfgrass pests in Florida are sugar cane grubs. "They are mowing through St. Augustinegrass," she says, adding that finding two to three sugar cane grubs per square foot would merit a treatment.

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*Curt Harler, managing editor of Golfdom's TurfGrass Trends, contributed to this story.*