

Crown hydration may be a

Royal Pain

but superintendents have learned how to deal with it

'T is the season for snow, cold and potential turf damage, especially in the North. But these days, what with the wacky weather we're experiencing (I know, people have been saying this for decades), it seems that most states in the union are not immune from the teeth-chattering wrath of Old Man Winter.

That said, we turn our attention to crown hydration, one of the most common types of low-temperature injury in turf. Recently, we asked superintendents: What can you do to contain crown hydration or stop it from occurring? Here's what they had to say:

"What we do is very simple. We spray with one of the antitranspirant materials because we can have extended periods without snow here in Chicago. We topdress the greens and tees generously. We also cover a number of our problem greens."

— **Tommy Witt, certified superintendent and golf course manager of Northmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill.**

"I think most damage begins in the spring when low-temperature hardiness decreases and the hydration of the crown starts to increase. Here are some of the ways to prevent it from happening:

- Minimize high nitrogen applications late in the year.
- Minimize heavy irrigation in the late fall.
- Aerate compacted soils to increase drainage.
- Remove thatch, which tends to raise the

crown of the plant from the soil.

■ Increasing the height of cut and reducing the frequency of mowing in the late fall will help the plant slow its growth and lower the crown hydration level."

— **Bryan Tipton, former certified superintendent of Sutton Bay Golf Club in Agar, S.D., who begins work as certified superintendent of Eagle Ridge Golf Course in Williston, N.D., in February.**

"Come spring, when the snow is melting, we shovel pathways on the greens so there isn't any free-standing water to freeze and damage crowns. Also, we try to let the greens grow a bit in the late fall so they can store up carbohydrates. We do our best, but we're still at the mercy of nature at times. The last two winters have been tough."

— **James Bade, superintendent of Somerset Country Club in St. Paul, Minn.**

"Every fall before snow cover, we aerate our greens and tees to create more drainage for any excess water accumulation. We then apply a heavy application of topdressing to act as insulation for the crown portion of the plant. We only mat in the topdressing once so that we do not completely fill in the holes and it then acts as a natural blanket. The only other protection we do to greens subject to extreme wind conditions is cover them with permeable tarps. This step is strictly for prevention of wind dessication."

— **Greig Barker, assistant superintendent of North Halton Golf & Country Club in Georgetown, Ontario.**

Compiled by Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief



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