

Topdressing

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and then make needed adjustments to get the desired result.

"Topdressers available today have advanced technology that allow for easy to establish adjustments, so the operator can achieve the right application the first time," Ferguson says.

Controllers are easier and better than ever in controlling belt and spinner speed, Ferguson adds. Wireless controllers can operate units from up to 150 yards away, allowing for a second person to watch the performance and make adjustments in real-time. These controllers can also store desired settings from one application to the next for repeatable, consistent topdressing results.

What to look for?

If a superintendent is shopping for a new topdresser, what does he or she need to look for? First, that superintendent must know exactly how he or she plans to use the topdresser, Kinkead points out. "Is the person using it just for greens? Or is the person using it for greens, tees and approaches?" Kinkead asks.

Green size plays a role in topdresser selection.

"If you have small greens, you probably need a truck mount," Kinkead adds. "A tow-behind is the best way to go for bigger greens."

And if that superintendent plans to use the topdresser for fairways, he or she must purchase a larger machine that will also double as a material handler.

Topdressing frequency is also an issue. If the superintendent only topdresses four or five times a year, he or she probably doesn't need a spinner topdresser, Kinkead says. A less-expensive ground-drive drop spreader would do just fine.

"You don't have to spend the extra dollars if you're only going to topdress a

handful of times a year," Kinkead says.

A topdresser's durability should also be considered, Kinkead adds. Considering it's a six- to 10-year purchase, a superintendent doesn't want to buy a piece of junk. Also, the superintendent should consider the machine's warranty and resale value.

And a superintendent shouldn't buy a topdresser without demonstrating it and all of its applications, Kinkead says. That means conducting light and heavy applications.

The superintendent should also look for a topdresser with a hopper that's long enough for the loader bucket, Dufault says. Also, the topdresser should have a big enough gas tank to cover 18 holes on one route. Dufault says selecting the right hitch weight is vital on pull-type units. "Without the proper hitch weight, the pull vehicle spins the tires going up onto the greens and tears up the grass," he says.

A superintendent should also keep maintenance in mind when selecting a topdresser. To address maintenance issues, TurfEx built a topdresser with a corrosion-resistant polyethylene hopper, which doesn't need the frequent washings

or paint touch-ups that a steel-built unit does, Carmichael says. The company's all-electric design has also eliminated many of the moving parts and other maintenance requirements associated with hydraulically powered machines, he adds.

If a superintendent is going to use the topdresser on greens, he should select

a model with a lightweight design, Carmichael says. "Look for hoppers made of lightweight materials, such as polyethylene, in order to keep that pressure rating to a minimum," he adds.

Ferguson says the service and support of the topdresser distributor and manufacturer should also be high on the list of important things to consider.

Randy Dufault says today's topdressers are easy to use and adjust because they have to be.



"Support from your distributor and manufacturer will allow the superintendent to fine tune a course's topdressing program as the needs, goals and expectations of the golfers change," he says.

Ferguson also says superintendents shouldn't change their topdressing programs to match a topdresser's abilities. Superintendents also should consider a topdresser's ease of setup and operation.

"A customer should buy the topdresser that provides the best performance and results: perfect application rate and spread pattern; easy operation; simple to maintain; and lightest footprint," he says. ■



Scott Kinkead



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