



# Setting the Trap

By Neil Newman

*Editor's Note: "From Across The Country" in this issue means from central Wisconsin. Phil Pellitteri introduced me, via e-mail, to Neil Newman and his invention to trap deer flies and horseflies, very bothersome pests at times on Wisconsin golf courses. Neil graciously put this piece together for The Grass Roots. If you are interested in his invention, his address is included so you may contact him directly.*

In many parts of the state, when the golf season is in full swing, so is the horsefly and deerfly season. These pesky critters flying around your head can be more than a distraction; their bite can be downright painful. Unlike a mosquito, which has a hypodermic needle-like proboscis to suck up your blood, the

horsefly and deerfly (both are in the Tabanid family) have mouth parts that are blade-like for cutting through the skin. The fly then sponges up the oozing blood. The bite is painful because it inflicts a lot of damage to the skin. If this doesn't ruin your golf game concentration, I guess nothing else will.

So, what can be done about the problem? First you have to know a little about the life cycle of these flies. There are over thirty species of blood feeding horseflies and deerflies in Wisconsin. Canada reports to have 135 species. Like the mosquito, it is only the female that bites. Unlike the mosquito, these flies are only day feeders, so they are only hunting for a blood meal when golfers are on the links.

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Horseflies lay their eggs on stems or leaves, usually over moist soil that will, in a week or so, become the larval habitat. Eggs laid on leaves and grass blades escape many of the predators that would eat them if laid directly on the land. These larvae then overwinter in the soil where they may live more than a year and travel considerable distances through the soil. Horsefly larvae are savage predators, capturing their prey, usually the larvae of other insects, with their sharp sickle-shaped mandibles and paralyzing them with an injection of venom like a rattlesnake. Horsefly larvae are capable of a painful bite if handled. Deerfly larvae have a similar set of mandibles with venom glands, but no one is sure what their food consists of.

The adult flies are capable of flying over a mile from their breeding sites, which are usually near swamps, marshes and along pond and stream banks. The University of Manitoba reports measuring the speed of these flies at over 60 miles per hour when they are on the trail of "the love of their life."

What can you do? No satisfactory chemical control has been developed for these insects. The preferred wetland habitat that support the larvae make it impractical and environmentally unacceptable to treat breeding sites. Adults do not rest on predictable surfaces, so residual insecticide treatments are not effective. Fogging or the use of aerosol insecticides only knock down what is present at the time of treatment, but more flies can migrate into an area in a matter of minutes.

There is one time in the life cycle of these flies when they are vulnerable. That is when the adult female is looking for a blood meal. She is a visual hunter. A trap is commercially available to take advantage of these circumstances. The trap is called the HORSE PAL. Originally developed, with guidance from the University of Wisconsin Extension, for the horse industry, it is finding wide acceptance among swimming pool owners, summer camps, and others that just want to be free of these pests. The trap has a target that attracts the fly. When it finds that the target is not a blood meal, the trap takes advantage of the fly's nature and leads it into a capture bottle on the top of the trap where the fly is soon killed by the heat of the sun. The trap was developed on a fly infested 135-acre farm in mid-Wisconsin. After three years of trapping development, there are no longer enough flies present to continue meaningful development on the farm.

Further information about horseflies, deerflies and the trap can be found on the HORSE PAL internet web site [www.bitingflies.com](http://www.bitingflies.com) or by calling toll free 1-888-685-2244. 🌿

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# The Great Wisconsin Mowing Marathon

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

"You're crazy!" Bogey Calhoun said as he shook his head in disbelief, which was a little like the pot calling the kettle black.

"Worse," Steady Eddie Middleton chimed in. "It proves you're simple."

"Yeah, but will you guys back me on this or not?" Harry Oxford wanted to know.

"Count me in!" Tom Morris responded immediately. "I think you have come up with a cool idea."

"Me, too," I said. "Ignore Calhoun and Middleton. You will have more support from our colleagues than you will know what to do with. Those two duds will only get under foot."

"No, no," they protested now, almost in unison. "We want to be involved, too."

"We'll think about it," Tom said. "You may have missed your chance."

What Ox had bounced off his buddies was a bold plan he had to raise some money for the Boy Scouts of America. "This wonderful organization, which did so much for me and millions of others in youth, is suffering unfair criticism, despite the fact that the Supreme Court sided with them. I am going to try to show my respect and gratitude by raising some dough for their new building in town. And the fundraiser I have in mind is the mowing

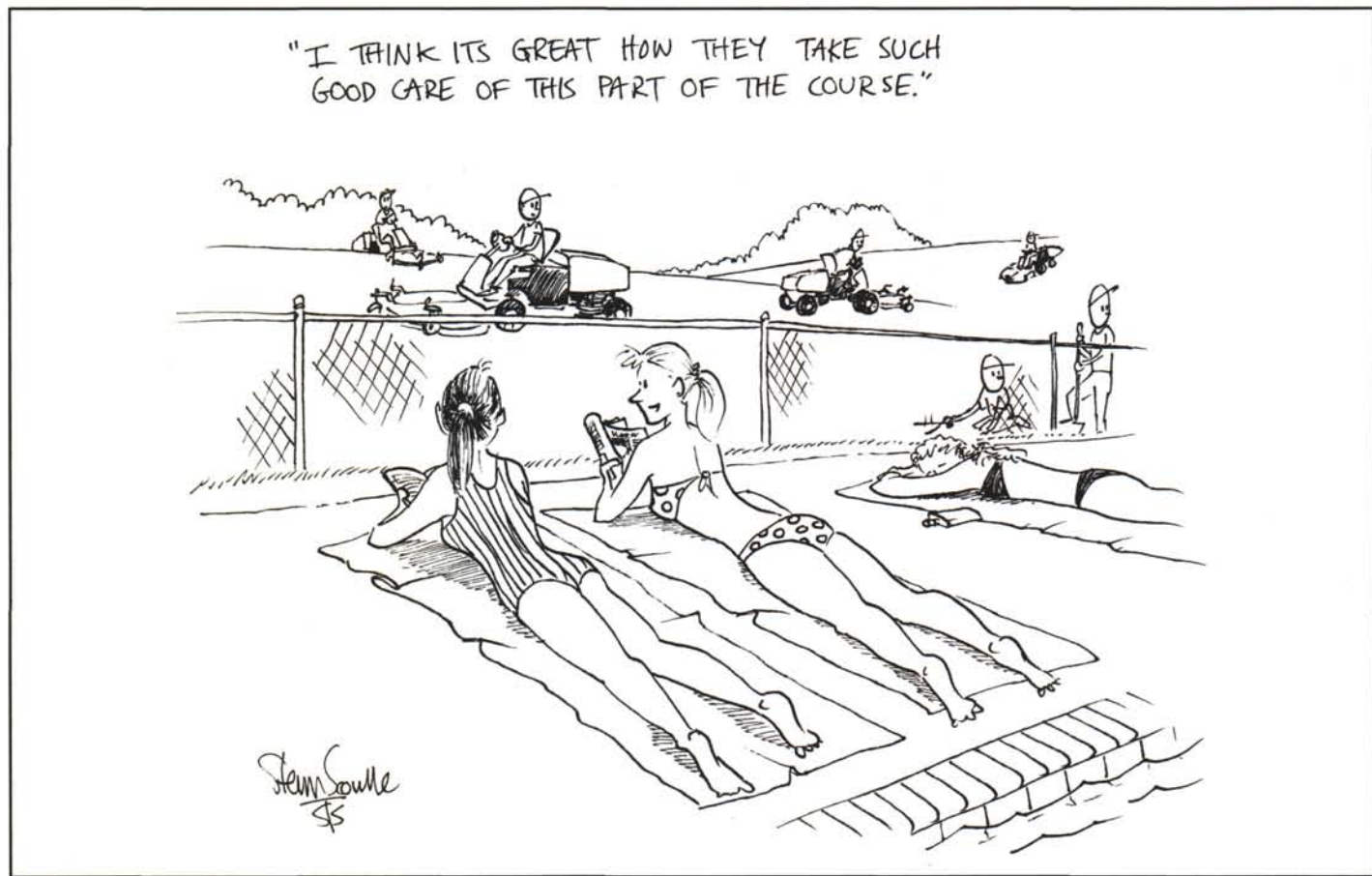
marathon that Calhoun and Middleton thought was so funny."

Ox hesitated until Tom said, "Keep going."

"Well, the Guinness Book of Records has records for all kinds of goofy things – the most continuous hours for a DJ to broadcast on the radio with no sleep, the longest continuous kiss, the most people jammed into a phone booth or a Volkswagon. I want the record for the most continuous hours of mowing with a triplex greensmower. I want to be the marathon mowing champ!"

"Where are you proposing to do this, Ox?" Bogey wondered.

"Right here at Serenity Bay CC."



Why would I want to set the mowing marathon record anywhere else?" Harry answered with some obvious irritation.

"Well, it seems to me like you are going to mow the stink out of your greens," Steady Eddie offered.

"Who says you have to mow greens?" Ox said. "Here is what I want to do – crosscut fairways. I would use triplex greensmowers to do the mowing."

Nobody said anything, a hint that Ox was making some sense.

"I think I'll need a committee to launch this thing, a committee of local people who will help with pledges and some members like you guys who can help with the technical end of it. I will need a PR person and I was thinking the major manufacturers would each loan a mower with lights.

"I know the Club members will

help – not much goes on up here – and I know the Scouts will be fantastic to work with."

Calhoun wanted to know what Ox was going to do when nature called. "I've read about the protocol for other record breaking events and we may use something like a 15 minute bathroom break every eight hours. I can eat and drink while I am operating the mower."

"One thing in favor of Serenity Bay is that the fairways are mostly flat. You shouldn't run any risk of a tipover," Tom observed.

"I will have to be careful of hitting trees on each turn - the fairways may be flat but they are tree-lined," Harry noted.

"If we are in a dry spell, dodging sprinkler heads will keep you wide awake at night," Steady Eddie laughed.

"Don't worry," Ox answered him,

"there won't be water going on any fairway I am mowing in the middle of the night!"

Tom wondered how long Harry thought he could stay wide awake enough to operate a triplex greensmower.

"I'd guess, based on my experience at having to stay awake in the Army, that 72 hours wouldn't be an unrealistic goal."

Then we ALL laughed, knowing not one of us would manage a meager 24 hour stint.

"Well," Tom drawled, "you'll never know unless you try."

Harry Oxford's genuine, generous personality carried his dream forward. The Club made their facilities available for the marathon. The public would be welcome to use restrooms, view the mowing attempt and park in the lot. Members teamed up and worked

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shifts, one person on each side of the fairway. They were there when Ox turned to make the return pass, insuring his safety and eliminating any risk of an accident.

Our Wisconsin distributors were great. Ox had a Toro, a Jacobsen and a John Deere triplex to use, all with headlights. They were set a 1/2" height of cut, but the baskets were left off. Superintendents and equipment managers from all over Wisconsin volunteered; it seems almost everyone wants to be part of such an original historic event. They helped on the course and in the shop. As Ox mowed his way down each fairway that night toward the green, a backup machine was there, ready to go. We didn't want a potential record washed out because of a machine failure. The plan was to switch machines each four hours, about the time a full tank of fuel would last. The machine that was under use had the fluids checked and a reel-to-bedknife adjustment made. It was fueled for its next shift.

As the time for the mowing marathon grew nearer, the pledges were pouring in from all over Wisconsin and around the country. Ox became a bit of a celebrity, even earning an interview on the Golf Channel. He was getting nervous from all the attention. "All I want to do is mow for the Scouts," was his heartfelt observation.

And mow he did. He was with a lot of people the entire time of the marathon. He spent a bit of each bathroom break every eight hours - 15 minutes - grabbing a catnap. He was wide-eyed, alert and good natured through about 60 hours.

Then it got tough. He didn't exactly hit a wall, but he started to fade fast. I was there and it seemed obvious to me he wasn't going to make his 72 hours. Until it started to rain.

It rained hard, and the rain was cold as if it had come down from the Arctic Circle. I was shivering

and my teeth rattled. And as I watched Ox, he smiled and smiled and gave me a thumbs up. The cold and miserable wet gave him a slap out of his drowsiness. We knew he had a chance at the 72 hours.

Members of Serenity Bay were proud as punch of their golf course superintendent. The Scouts were serving treats to all the team members, guests, citizens from town and out-of-towners, and anybody else who had shown up to see the mowing marathon.

In the end, he made 72 hours. By then he had quite an audience and

he had raised over \$20,000 for the local BSA troop and their building fund. It was an old fashioned scene, with cheering and happiness all around. Political correctness was out the window, and the scouting experience for the local kids was going to be better than ever.

And Harry Oxford - the Ox - had the world record for a mowing marathon.

"Wait until next year," he said as he rode off in a Cushman with his wife and kids for a good night's sleep. "Now I have a record to break!"

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# Spring Harvest

By **Krome Burke-Scoll**, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Greetings, although I've already met many of you, at both field days, or through our snow mold collection project, I'd like to introduce myself for the first time in *Grass Roots*. I work as a Research Specialist, and Lab Manager for Dr. Geunhwa Jung in the Department of Plant Pathology. Most of you have had occasion to meet Geunhwa and appreciate his enthusiasm and the commitment he brings to the turfgrass program. I am excited to play a part in the development of his research extension program, and help determine its future direction.

A brief synopsis of my history; I graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 1998 with a B.S. in Agricultural Science, as well as a high school teaching certificate. I worked a variety of jobs, and then joined the Peace Corps, and worked in Niger, Africa for a time. Upon my return to the U.S., I promptly left again to spend time exploring the terrain and culture of Eastern Europe (sorry to say I didn't tour a single course while there). Once again in Wisconsin, I began to feel the urge to do something of more value to my locale, I did some prototype work for a

large Wisconsin bicycle manufacturer, who shall remain nameless, but still was unsatisfied. I decided to make a return to my first love, and begin a professional approach to science. The marvelous and mysterious interactions between plant and pathogen have always fascinated me, so the Department of Plant Pathology was an easy choice. Lucky for me they had a new professor, who was hiring.

Through my work with the turfgrass program I have been exposed to an industry I had very few dealings with before. I have taken a lot of criticism from

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friends and associates involved with "serious" plant research, I have been told that I am wasting my time on improving the situation for a game of leisure for the wealthy. Honestly at first I was worried, maybe these people were correct? Maybe I was wasting my time, and valuable resources. Then I began to explore the history of the turf industry, and most importantly I began to become involved in the activities where I could meet and talk with people who make up the industry. I realized that the critics were mistaken, on several counts: golf is a game of leisure, this is true, as is fishing and auto racing, or cross-country skiing, but it is not for anybody to judge someone on their method of relaxation. Also, I found many people from all financial levels and all walks of life who loved the game, correcting for me another common misnomer. Finally, and most importantly for me to feel committed to the cause, I discovered almost universally, folks working in the turf field are not the water wasting, chemical

crazed (in the application sense) resource wasting demons that seems to be a popular caricature at the moment. In fact all of you expressed deep interest in completely the opposite, creating beautiful places where a person can shrug off the problems of our

fast paced society and play a game with their friends.

I met one superintendent after another this spring who was feeling annoyed at the popular portrayal of the industry as a relic unfit to exist in this modern world. People who felt daily chal-

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lenged to reduce their environmental effects from the inside of their being, and from without. I can empathize, there is absolutely nothing more exasperating than wanting and trying your best to achieve a level of performance and then having others jump down your throat before you can try. Or even worse assuming you were only making the changes due to fiscal concerns or a new statute in the law. It can make one feel like being a scapegoat is their lot.

No one wants a filthy environment, not me, not you (the entire turf industry), not the golfers. I don't believe this is or should be a point of contention. The general public wants to feel safe, the

golfers want a clean, attractive place to play, and you want to provide these assurances. Almost all of you fall into both of these groups, so I have great difficulty buying into the popular trend to "beat up on golf courses" as the source of our environmental problems. I feel in Wisconsin a strong chain has been formed between the turfgrass industry and research. I strongly believe research can help provide some answers to the misguided voice of media concern. We can help you achieve your goals as turf professionals, and the potential is there around each corner that we can do it with less waste, less money, and more efficiently than ever

before. These are some of my feelings on the current venue we are all playing in; let me elaborate some on what we are doing from the research end to help reach many of our goals.

It's been a bit more than a year since I took this position, and I'd like to take this opportunity to cogitate briefly on the development of our research agenda. Aside from the basic challenges of creating infrastructure, training employees and graduate students, our lab has done some deep searching to determine what to study. Quite a question really, these beginning years will form the foundation of this budding endeavor. With that in mind, we

