Suppression of Poa Annua Seed Heads

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During the fall of 1979, trial applications of Embark were made to try to supress poa annua seed heads in the forthcoming spring. I have always been a user of growth retardants such as Maintain, and MH30 around trees, steep banks and stream banks, to help eliminate hand work on the golf course.

When Embark was introduced by the 3M Company, it was claimed that it would stop seed head production in any plant, so I became interested in attempting to supress seed heads on poa annua with this product.

Applications were made at a rate of 16 ozs. per acre on different fairways on the golf course during the middle of November, 1979. The treated turf discolored badly, and in the spring of 1980 there were very little seed heads but also there was some turf loss in the treated areas, which was mostly poa annua.

During the middle of November 1980, application of 12 ozs. and 8 ozs. were applied. There was the same discoloration but in the spring of 1981 there were many seed heads in the treated areas. The loss of turf was not as great as with the 16 oz. rate. It was decided to switch to a spring application during the following season.

In early April, 1982, applications of 12 ozs., 8 ozs. and 4 ozs. of Embark per acre, were applied to different fairways on the golf course. The 12 oz. and 8 oz. rates looked extremely good. There was just slight discoloration in the beginning, but within two weeks these areas looked greener than the untreated areas and had no seed heads. The 4 oz. rate did have some seed heads and did not look as good as the areas treated with the higher rates.

In early April, 1983, ten acres of fairways were treated with the 8 oz. per acre rate of Embark, along with two tees and the back of one green. The results were quite drastic. There were no seed heads in the treated areas, and the contrast between treated and untreated areas was like night and day! These treatments worked so well that all fifty acres of fairways and three acres of tees will be treated in 1984.

The following observations should be noted:

1. The application should be made early in April or when turf is first greening up. This is important since seed heads develop almost at the same time that the poa annua starts to grow.
2. It is necessary to make sure that the sprayer is calibrated correctly, with new nozzles on the boom. Make sure all screens are clean inasmuch as any misses will be extremely visible.
3. Spray when there is dew on the turf, or use some type of marking system so there will be no misses during application.
4. When the grass plant starts to come out of the chemical reaction around the end of May, the plant has excellent color and growth. No fertjlizer should be applied at this time or any other time during the procedure.
5. If leaf spot is a problem or blue grass varieties are being treated, a fungicide must be applied. The treated turf is more susceptible to leaf spot at this time.
6. If low wet fairways are a problem an application of Embark at the 8 oz. rate will not only reduce seed heads, but will also eliminate 50 to 70% of mowing required in these areas.
7. The grass does seem healthier in June when there is no longer any reduction in growth.

In closing, the treatments to date have worked well, and our program will be expanded in 1984.

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