

Too Much of A Good Thing

By **BOB VAVREK**
USGA Agronomist

Many superintendents have gone the extra mile to keep the course as dry as possible during the recent long stretches of hot, humid weather. The potential for disease activity and other problems increases during steamy weather when the turf is overwatered. Evapotranspiration (ET) values can be surprisingly low during hot weather if the humidity is very high and the turf just doesn't need the extra moisture. Deep, infrequent automatic irrigation that is supplemented by timely hand watering appears to be the best option for keeping the turf healthy...or is it?

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out the summer and then water accordingly. This is especially important at older courses where the turf is dominated by *Poa annua*. Granted, *Poa annua* roots were healthy and deep earlier this year due to the mild, cool spring, but *Poa* roots will die back in response to increasing soil temperatures during long periods of stressful weather. Much of the water applied to the turf during deep, infrequent irrigation cycle may be beyond the reach of the roots during late July and August. More frequent light irrigation cycles are recommended. This doesn't mean a lot more water is needed, just that the water needs to be applied in a manner to effectively wet the root zone of the turf - a root zone that may only be a half inch deep, or less.

Another concern with keeping the course extra-dry during humid weather is the need to adjust irrigation cycles quickly when the weather finally breaks. After a week of temperatures in the mid 90's and high humidity many of us breath a sigh of relief when a cool front finally sweeps through and the daytime highs only reach the low 70's accompanied by a cool, dry breeze. The sigh is followed by a gasp when severe wilt occurs due to ET rates that shoot through the roof. Sometimes a considerable amount of *Poa annua* is lost during the break in the weather because the irrigation programs were not adjusted fast enough to supply water to weak, shallow rooted turf.

Keeping the course firm and dry is the best policy for providing golfer the most consistent playing conditions throughout the season. Furthermore, more bad things can happen to overwatered turf compared to turf that is kept on the dry side. Just keep in mind that there are times when you can get too much of a good thing.

ON THE ROAD WITH THE USGA

By **R.A. (Bob) Brame, Director**

The heat of summer has arrived and the usual complement of challenges appears to be on the horizon. Most courses have dried out from the wet spring, although there are a few that have not yet watered greens as of 6/28/02. Golfers should remember that the maintenance staff pulling hoses to hand water knobs, edges and isolated dry spots in an effort to minimize sprinkler usage is money well spent. Although hand watering/syringing does cause some slight inconvenience to play, dry is the target, and that means deep and infrequent irrigation cycles to the extent applicable variables allow. Heat and water together doesn't bode well for healthy turf, and since the heat cannot be controlled - push towards the dry end of the continuum, again, to the extent possible.

Recent visits have revealed *Poa annua* under stress and there have been a few sightings of both anthracnose and summer patch disease activity. So far, (6/28/02) no brown patch or *Pythium*, but with the heat and humidity increasing it's only a matter of time. Most courses have initiated a preventative posture with fungicide applications for disease control on greens.

Aquatic weeds have been a problem at several courses visited over the last couple of weeks. There is a developing trend for courses to utilize aquatic management companies to enhance water features. Not a bad idea, considering the level of specialty that pond/lake management brings.

The last few weeks also have exposed several courses with a serious moss encroachment problem. In most cases it has been a resurgence of past encroachment. However, there are a few courses that have never had moss growth on greens in the past that have experienced problems this spring. Mowing height, fertilization and moisture retention in the upper profile should all be considered when working to eliminate the environment that allowed the encroachment. There are a number of products that can be used to physically desiccate moss tissue, but be sure to address the cause rather than just the symptom.

Now is the time to maintain consistency with light and frequent foliar feeding. This means there may occasionally be times when nothing is in the spray tank but a soluble fertilizer. Also, how about the mowing height on greens? Does it balance health and playability? Don't forget about the value of solid front rollers over that of grooved should weather conditions become harsh.

We have entered the time of year when "caution" is the word. Now is not the time to experiment or try unknown strategies. It could be a long summer and the best posture is to rely upon what was established over the fall and spring, with the guiding rule being "when in doubt, don't do anything."

(Editor's Note: Bob Brame can be reached at bobbrame@usga.org or 859-356-3272.)