

ON THE ROAD WITH THE USGA

By BOB BRAME, USGA Agronomist

Most courses throughout the lower portion of the North Central Region are moving into the season with no major problems. The very inconsistent weather has been a challenge, but then weather conditions always are. Overall, recent visits have shown most courses to be in reasonably good early season condition. That is, relative to their play volume and operating budgets.

Do not allow the current good condition of the course to alter planned aeration. Early to mid-May is a good time slot for putting surface aeration and the benefits far outweigh any short-term inconvenience. Stay with previously laid out plans for early May aeration. Should we experience a harsh summer you'll be glad aeration was not altered or postponed.

Remember that spring is not the time to make-up for missing the mark with fall feeding. In fact, if the turf was not fed properly last fall the deficit cannot be corrected until the coming fall. Spring is the time to be conservative with cool-season grass feeding. Light rate applications of readily available nutrients may have value, but be cautious and stay in control (*minimal to no slow release feeding*).

A few courses have experienced some pink snow mold (*Microdochium nivale*) and cool-season brown patch (*Rhizoctonia cerealis*) disease activity over the last few weeks. For most the warmer weather has eliminated any lingering concern from either of these diseases. If you're still finalizing your fungicide spray rotation for the coming season give us a call to discuss specific concerns.

Poa annua seed-heads on putting surfaces have been a discussion topic on recent visits. There is no combination of cultural and/or chemical strategies that is right for all courses. A number of factors must be considered to arrive at a plan that will work for the specific needs of your course. Each and every plant growth regulator or cultural practice has advantages and disadvantages. In fact, this is a good example of what our Turf Advisory Service is about – taking into account desired conditioning, relative to available resources, and drawing upon research and field observations to formulate appropriate recommendations.

We're fast approaching the cutoff for the early season discount with TAS subscription. Be sure that payment is received at Golf House prior to May 15th to realize the \$300 early season discount. Even with early payment, visits can be scheduled at any time during the season.

Resolve now to guard priorities as the busy season fast approaches. Don't let your family and friends wilt as the heat goes up.

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

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