

Biting Flies

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By 2001 the biting flies on our course were so bad that we had seriously discussed selling the course that took us five years to build. The flies not only were driving our staff crazy but, worst of all, were affecting our golfers, resulting in fewer rounds and lost revenue.

We solved the problem and wrote about the solution in the January 2003 issue of *Golf Course Management*. Since then I have received many "how's-it-going" inquiries and felt that an update four years later would be helpful to those with a similar problem and for those who might have missed the original article.

Our course, Windy Hills Golf Club, in Easton, N.Y. is surrounded by many natural wet areas along the Battenkill River. It so happens that wet areas are the kind of breeding grounds that his family of flies seeks. Although our particular problem

was deer flies, other members of this family of biting flies are the horsefly and yellow fly. My initial investigation of how to address our fly problem was discouraging. Because insecticides are ineffective, many of the entomology web sites (and fellow superintendents) said that there was no solution to the problem. You just had to wait the season out. This turned out not to be true.

Fortunately, in 2001 we found a trap on the web that effectively trapped biting flies and purchased six of them. We placed the traps where flies were most numerous and out of the way of the golfers. That first year we estimated we trapped between 600 to 700 flies each day. It is dramatic to see the many dead flies in the trap, but the real biological significance is that none of those dead flies will be laying eggs for the coming season.

That first year we reduced our deer fly problem by about 75%. It reduced our number one complaint to a tolerable problem. The increase in green fees that first season quickly paid off the expense of the traps. The traps have required virtually no maintenance and with proper winter storage will be in good shape after five seasons.



Subsequent seasons have seen a steady reduction in the number of biting flies to the point where they are no longer a significant issue for our customers or staff. Continuing to use the traps each year has allowed us to keep the fly problem from recurring. Last year the traps continued to catch biting flies, although at a reduced rate given the lower number of flies that appear each year. After five years we remain very pleased with our solution.

(Editor's Note: Go to www.bitingflies.com or call 1-888-685-2244 for more information.)

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