

When Skunks Are Vile

Discussion of an unusual subject yet one which is very important. The author has told the truth and what he says may be of great help to turf culture experts.

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SOMETIME ago, Mr. C. Ream wrote a very interesting article for your magazine on "War Against Ants," and closed his article asking for information regarding the different pests one has to contend with in the maintenance of fine turf. Here is something I hope may interest our correspondent, also others, although I am hoping they may not have a similar experience to mine.

Though I have to revert back several seasons, the incident is still fresh in my memory. One morning early in September, 1925, one of my staff informed me that the crows had torn our number seven green all to pieces. Accepting the information as an exaggeration, I inspected the green and found to my consternation that my informant had used the right term. My first impression of the green was that a large litter of little pigs had been having a rooting match, it was figuratively speaking torn all to pieces.

I may say that the crows had bothered us somewhat by boring after grubs, etc., but the tracks shown in the dew on the grass proved to be of a four-footed animal and on making an inspection of the surroundings I was convinced by signs I saw, that the offenders were of the family "skunk." Other greens had also been visited and parts of the fairways were in bad shape from the same cause. We concluded that the skunks were boring after a large white grub presumably that of the June Beetle.

At that time we were turfing on an extensive scale and finding large numbers of larva or grubs, and although the turf we were lifting was less than 100 yards from the despoiled green we never saw where the skunk had worked. I wonder could it be that even the skunk prefers bent grass to that of a coarse mixture?

SKUNKS DO NOT LIKE STRYCHNINE

THE holes made by these pests were about the size of a walnut up to a bee's egg. Realizing we had to do something and that quickly, I procured some strychnine, also some pieces of fat meat forming

these into pieces resembling a grub, by making a slight incision it enabled us to put a little of the poison in the meat then gently rolling the same into form these were placed here and there at dusk, where the pests had operated. On making an early morning round we were rewarded with two crows but later in the day two skunks were brought to light.

The next evening we used as bait some of the grubs mentioned, these we damped with milk then slightly dusted the strychnine over them all.

This bait we placed just inside some likely holes we had located in the daytime, lightly covering the baits with soil. By adopting this method we accounted for seventeen skunks within the week and with no small satisfaction. I should state that the reason we used milk on the grubs was to prevent the poison from falling off with the movement of the grubs. Furthermore, we treated some of our greens with bichloride of mercury in the hope of destroying the grubs, but we noticed no change in this direction. In all, we had eight of our greens more or less temporarily spoiled by these carnivorous pests.

With their ranks decimated we had a little respite, though there were one or two that still persisted in visiting us and nothing we could do to stop them, they had evidently gotten wise. One bright moonlight night I also made a visit to one green and there I saw my enemy.

Now I had heard several version from some of the natives as to what a skunk would do if interfered with, and here was my chance to prove for myself. First, I circled Mr. Skunk, keeping a respectful distance. As luck would have it he was on the fairway close to the green. The beastie went on feeding, then I shouted and whistled. Failing to arouse him I loaded two guns one with shells, the other with my Lady Nicotine. I approached within about forty feet but neither my presence or tobacco smoke aroused him. I have his skin as a memento. Since then I am pleased to say we have not suffered by their depredations.