

How Do You Do...?

The Question -- How Do You Schedule Chemical Applications to Avoid Interference with Field Use?

Answered by Dale Getz, Athletic Facilities Manager, University of Notre Dame (IN)

Managing sports turf is a TOUGH JOB. As sports turf managers, we are expected to produce a turf that can withstand the use and abuse of 300 pounders, practicing twice per day, sometimes 7 days a week. The turfgrass not only needs to withstand this kind of use/abuse but it also must look like the front lawn of the White House that may only get a few footsteps on it each year by scurrying 120 pound female interns.

All joking aside, it is our job to produce sports turf that both looks and performs at the highest standards. To accomplish this we must mow, aerify, verticut, spread fertilizers and apply pesticides often. One of the critical issues we face is the timing of the pesticide applications so as not to interfere with practice and/or play schedules and yet provide the plant protection necessary for healthy turfgrass.

I do four things when determining a spray program. The first is to know your turfgrass. Know where you have had disease or insect problems in the past so that you can plan preventive sprays prior to field use. This should decrease the number of "contact" pesticides needed during the busy part of field use.

Second, if you find it necessary to spray during the play or practice season, and eventually you will, choose pesticides that are the least toxic and yet will accomplish the control you are looking for. This is sound advice for any spray program and is the backbone of integrated pest management.

Third, time the applications so that you adhere to all label regulations for re-entry. This is extremely important since most sports turf is not just walked on, but it is rolled on and ground into clothes, skin, cuts, etc.. Whenever possible try to even extend the re-entry period stated on the label. To do this you may have to apply a spray in late evening or at night followed by irrigation to water it in or you may have to wait until a road trip or

an away game. Whatever it takes to ensure the safety of the players.

Fourth, you must communicate with the coaches, administrators and/or medical staff the reasons for the spray, your plan for timing the spray application and the associated safety precautions of the product(s) you plan to apply. They may choose to practice on another field, they may re-schedule a practice or they may decide to live with the damage that could occur if you did not spray.

Answered by Eric Shawn, Plant Manager, Catlin Gabel School, Portland, OR

We give priority to avoiding chemical applications whenever possible. When there is no alternative, we use the least toxic product that we can find for a specific problem. We schedule field spraying for week-ends, teacher in-service days and vacation periods whenever we can.

Our greatest challenge is working through scheduling conflicts with coaches and teachers. We try to assist them with frequent reminders via e-mail, voice mail, memos and/or individual conversations, and we will post workers on the field to turn classes around when they arrive for unannounced use of the fields after chemical applications.

Answered by Tom Burns, Director of Grounds, Texas Rangers

Scheduling chemical applications is seldom as easy as loading the sprayer and doing the application. Here at The Ballpark in Arlington, in addition to the usual applicator and environmental safety concerns, we have tours that run year round. The tour office sends out a schedule every two weeks outlining special tours in addition to the regular 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. schedule. Our marketing and public relations departments also use the field for various commercial and photo shoots, in addition to promotional and sponsor related events. The team gets to use the field on the days that are left.

So, we are left with nights and early mornings. When the team is out of town we can make applications in the early evening and if necessary turn on the lights and work at night. We often will spray liquid fertilizers and micro-nutrients an hour or so after a game has ended. This helps us keep the turf color more consistent and reduces stress on high traffic areas. Winds are generally lighter at this time and there is less risk of drift to non target areas.

Answered by Brian McCabe, Foreman, Town of Methuen, MA

In April, we start to soil test the
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fields that we plan to work on. This gives us a good program to work with.

This year, in addition to re-doing two of my fields (a job in itself), I am going to need to use and apply insecticide on two or more of the fields due to grubs. In order to accomplish all this, we work very closely with the schools to make sure that we know their schedules for practices, etc. **and** that they are notified when we are treating an area as to which area and how long they will need to stay out of that particular area.

In April, June, August and October, I do my major applications on the fields and we have the teams scheduled for at least three open days a month for fertilization, etc.

In addition to the weather, which we ALL know you can't predict to schedule around, we have what we call outside teams (t-ball, soccer, field hockey, baseball and softball) to schedule around. We basically have to rely on communication and teamwork to help us to schedule our chemical applications and everyone else's practices and games around each other.

STM

Members on the Move

Bruce Boman, formerly with the City of San Diego's Park & Rec. Department, has taken a Lead position with the Grounds Department at Southwestern Community College, Chula Vista, CA.

Chris Bunnell, formerly with the City of San Marcos, has taken a position with Pro Greens Turf Services.

Steve Dugas, formerly with Pepperdine University, has taken the position of Manager for Landscape Services at Cal State Fullerton.

Anthony Leonard, former student member, is currently doing research for Hummer Turfgrass Systems in Lancaster, PA.

CONGRATULATIONS GUYS!!

If you, or someone you know, has changed positions, give us a call here at Headquarters. We'll be happy to help get the word out!

Educational Opportunities!!

1998 Groundskeepers Management Academy - conducted by STMA member & sportsTURF Magazine's 1997 Sports Field Manager of the Year, Floyd Perry.

Dates and locations are:

July 6-10 - Millington, TN

August 17-21 - Bethel, CT

August 24-28 - Colonial Heights, VA

August 31-September 4 - Kissimmee, FL

September 27-October 1 - Salt Lake City, UT

If you are interested in learning more about the Groundskeepers Management Academy, contact Floyd Perry at (800) 227-9381.

Q: What do all of these teams have in common?

Oakland A's
Arizona Diamondbacks
University of Texas Longhorns
San Diego Chargers
University of Southern California Trojans
California Angels
Arizona State University Sun Devils
San Francisco 49'ers
San Diego State University Aztecs
San Francisco Giants
San Diego Padres
Los Angeles Dodgers
Oakland Raiders
Arizona Cardinals

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