

FIELD TIPS

Getting Started With Disease Prediction

Equipment: Two companies currently sell computerized weather stations which include some of the disease prediction models described in this article: 1.) Metos® Golf from Gempler's, 1-800-234-5333, P.O. Box 270, 211 Blue Mounds, Rd., Mt. Horeb, WI 53572. 2.) Envirocaster® from Neogen Corporation, 1-800-234-5333, 620 Leshar Place, Lansing, MI 48808. Neogen Corporation also produces the Alert@ immunoassay field kits.

Most golf courses already have some kind of weather station, some of which calculate degree days. Careful record keeping can help turf managers develop prediction systems specific to their golf courses by comparing records of environmental conditions with disease records. Most of the disease models currently available could even be calculated without a computer using weather station data, although the process would be time-consuming.

Where to place the equipment: Some turf managers prefer to monitor "hot spots" where disease first appears. Others prefer to place equipment in a more "average" area. Others find accessibility and safety to be important factors and place the equipment near the maintenance buildings.

Field evaluation: Disease prediction systems should not be considered oracles to be obeyed without consideration of all available information sources. All systems need to be field tested in each new locale. Try to leave a nontreated area and monitor disease development to be compared to disease predictions from the computer. This is especially important if the disease model was developed in a different region.

When testing models, be certain of your disease diagnosis. Also, be sure to monitor environmental conditions exactly as specified in the disease model. For example, the Massachusetts brown patch model measures relative humidity duration just above the turf surface at putting green height. If it is monitored at higher levels, where relative humidity is lower, predictions may be inaccurate.

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