



TURFAX™

Volume 7, Number 1



January–February 1999

of the International Sports Turf Institute, Inc.

The International Newsletter about Current Developments in Turfgrass

IN THIS ISSUE

- Golf Course Closings and Frost Delays on Putting Greens
- Dealing with Skunk and Raccoon Problems in Turf
- Why Putting Greens Appear Red or Purple in Winter and Spring
- Drive 75 DF—A New Herbicide for 1999
- Counting Wildlife—Is There More?
- Research Summary: Options for Potential Enhancement of Zoysiagrass Establishment
- JB Comments: High- and Low-Density Cultivar Trade-Offs
- Ask Dr. Beard

Golf Course Closings and Frost Delays on Putting Greens

James B Beard

Closing a golf course is one of the most difficult and emotional questions faced by the golf course staff. It adversely affects cash flow in all departments and may create dissension among the golfing clientele.

A primary reason for closing a golf course is adverse weather conditions. Many factors influence the decision. Since most of these factors call for personal judgment, the decision is frequently disputed. This is especially true if the reasons are not clearly understood. Even though judgment is involved, **the decision should be based on all available facts, with the best long-term interests of the entire golfing clientele and the golf course condition being the primary governing factors.**

The final decision is the responsibility of either the green committee chair, who has direct responsibility to the membership for maintenance of the course, or the owner or designated authority, in the case of privately owned clubs. The decision is strongly influenced by and usually solely dependent on the judgment of the golf course superintendent. The properly trained, experienced golf course superintendent is capable of rendering expert professional advice on the subject and has the capability to recognize the myriad factors that influence the future well-being of a turf and its playability that are not recognized or understood by golfers. Thus, **as a practical solution, the decision-making responsibility usually is delegated to the golf course superintendent.**

Traffic Stresses. There are two main detrimental effects that result from traffic stress on golf course turf: (a) **soil compaction**, the extent of which is determined by the pressure per unit area exerted on the soil, and (b) **turfgrass wear stress** from abrasive action on grass shoots.

Bare feet are particularly destructive to putting greens in terms of soil compaction, as are both boots and shoes with small heels. This is because the body weight is exerted on a relatively small turfed surface area. Also, body weight that is distributed largely on the spike shoulders of regular golf shoes causes more damage than is the case of golf shoes with recessed spike shoulders or spikeless golf shoes with modest knobs.

Hand-pulled and electric hand golf carts exert more pounds of pressure per square inch than do most riding 3- or 4-wheel powered golf carts. For this reason, **hand-pulled carts should be under the same operating restrictions as are powered golf carts.** The abrasive action of powered golf cart tires in turning, starting, and stopping makes these carts more likely to injure a turf than is the case for hand-pulled carts, especially on fairways. However, hand-pulled carts are more often found in inappropriate areas.

Adverse Weather Conditions. Weather has adverse effects on both the turfgrass and the underlying soil. Such effects are further aggravated by traffic over wet areas. The

Continued on page 3