



*Use a mower equipped with a solid front roller to accelerate the rate of turf recovery along a severely damaged cleanup pass.*

## A SOLID RECOMMENDATION

BY BOB VAVREK | REGIONAL DIRECTOR, CENTRAL REGION

**S**oggy is the word that sums up the weather and course conditions across the Central Region so far this season. Putting greens are typically mowed six to seven days a week by June – even in the northernmost parts of the region. However, mowing soft, wet greens at ultra-low heights of cut is risky business considering the likelihood of scalping turf.

Determining when wet greens are firm enough to safely accommodate a mower is a considerable challenge, and not all areas of a given putting green may be ready at the same time. Scalping injury to a wet green often occurs along the perimeter or cleanup pass. This is especially true where an accumulation of sand topdressing in the collar impedes surface drainage of excess water off the putting surface.

Scalping, poor surface drainage and inconsistent irrigation coverage are some common factors that result in poor turf quality along the cleanup pass. Once perimeter turf begins to suffer, the switch from grooved front rollers to solid rollers on the putting green mowers is recommended. In effect, a solid roller will

slightly elevate the height of cut because solid rollers sink less into a soft surface than a grooved roller. A two- or three-piece solid roller that allows the inside edge to move slower than the outside edge will also reduce the potential of the roller to bruise turf when the unit is constantly turning along the cleanup pass.

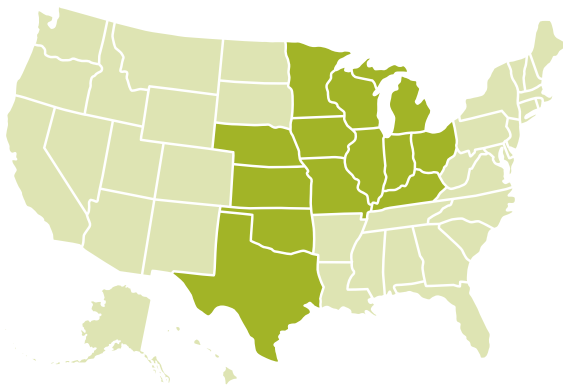
It's always a surprise to see how many maintenance facilities stock nothing but grooved rollers for their putting green mowers. Similarly, there are young superintendents who have never used, or even seen, a solid front roller on a walk-behind or triplex putting green mower since grooved rollers tend to be standard issue on new equipment.

Sometimes the most basic tools available to reduce putting green stress are overlooked in today's age of high-tech turf maintenance. Keep the switch from grooved to solid rollers among your first options to try, instead of a last resort, when putting green stress occurs. Even if putting greens are not showing stress, a proactive switch to solid rollers would be a wise decision to reduce mechanical wear as high temperatures and humidity are experienced.



For information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service Contact the Green Section Staff.

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