

# Florida supers try biocontrols to relieve scourge of mole crickets

**GAINESVILLE, Fla.**—Some Florida turf professionals are using nematodes and red-eyed flies to help control the mole cricket, one of the South's most hated pests.

Two University of Florida scientists, H. Howard Frank and nematologist Grover Smart, released parasitic nematodes (*Steinernema scapterisci*) and Brazilian red-eyed flies (*ormia depleta*) at two sites in 1985. They concluded their project last year after reportedly having been successful in establishing the parasites in several counties. They say they've recorded all-time lows in mole cricket trapping records.

"Mole cricket damage to the turfgrass industry could be devastating," to golf courses, sod producers and homeowners, says Robert J. Yount, executive director of the Florida Turfgrass Association. The cost to repair mole cricket damage is estimated at \$46 million per year.

The FTGA funded the University research with more than \$250,000 after state funding ran out in 1987.

Smart was awarded a patent late last year to use the Uruguayan nematode

against mole crickets. The patent has been licensed to BioControl, Inc., a new company headquartered in Tampa, Fla. BioControl markets the nematodes to golf course superintendents and other turf professionals in the Southeast.

BioControl

tions by the end of the year, including repeat treatments.

According to McCaskill, companies using the product include Augusta National and Bay Hill, site of the Masters and Nestle Invitational, respectively.

BioControl has treated several athletic fields in one Florida county, and

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founder, Cameron McCaskill, says at least 50 golf courses have been treated with the nematodes this year. The company expects to sell 200 applica-

about a dozen grazing pastures, which are also plagued by the mole cricket.

According to McCaskill, sod farms, seed growing acreage and vegetable crops can be targets of the crickets.

McCaskill says the nematode demand is far ahead of the supply. "If we could supply the demand that's out there, we could have a fair amount of business very quickly," says McCaskill.

Yount says about five percent of the state's 1,200 golf courses have begun using the biological control method as a standard maintenance practice, and predicts that figure will rise to 60 percent in 10 years.

"It's a high-tech approach and a very valid approach," says Yount, "but the industry itself wants to sit back and be sure, before they introduce a treatment like this on their very valuable land, that it does indeed work."



**About five percent of Florida's 1200 golf courses have been treated with biocontrols as a standard maintenance practice. Up to 60 percent are predicted to be using some form of biological controls in 10 years.**