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The poop on bird waste

Our tree climbing crews are concerned about catching disease germs from bird droppings on trees. Is this possible? If so, what can we do to prevent it?

—INDIANA

A National Wildlife Health Center representative indicated that if bird droppings contain this "disease agent," it is possible for humans to be infected. However, if climbers protect themselves with proper safety clothing, gloves, goggles, hard hat, boots, and practice proper hygiene, this will help minimize exposure and in turn reduce their chance of being infected with a disease. In addition, cleaning boots and soiled tools in a mixture of two full caps of bleach in one gallon of warm water will help disinfect contaminated items.

A specific disease has been identified as a potential health problem when large numbers of birds roost during the night and large amounts of their droppings are in one area. A soil fungus called *Histoplasma capsulatum* can grow in bird droppings and cause Histoplasmosis in humans.

The fungus spores are usually inhaled, and produce a lung infection which is often mild and often goes unnoticed. A few severe cases result in fever, coughing, sweating and loss of weight. The potential for this disease is increased if the contaminated area is in an enclosed space. To help minimize the exposure, workers should wear

face masks to protect themselves from inhaling the fungal spores.

Reports indicate that most people who are exposed to this fungus develop an immunity without suffering any symptoms.

Flooded fairways: help!

We sprigged a golf course fairway with Bermudagrass during the summer of 1996. The heavy rains of early March have left the area under water for about a week. What kind of recovery should we expect from the Bermudagrass?

—KENTUCKY

Do the following as soon as possible:

- 1) Remove debris or silt.
- 2) Remove, core or slice the thin crust of deposit.
- 3) Have the soil tested for pH, soluble salts and nutrient levels. Provide corrective treatments as needed.
- 4) If there are thin areas or no sign of Bermudagrass recovery, resprig as needed.
- 5) Since the turf was under water for an extended period, provide good cultural practices to help improve the plant health.

The lack of aeration and subsequent suffocation of living tissues is the major problem. Often, turfgrass under lowlands may encounter flooding from time to time and perhaps adapt to it. The problem usually comes from the length of time water is submerging or drowning the plant. Other factors which influence flooding injury

are: 1) turfgrass species; 2) depth of submergence; 3) physiological condition of the plant tissue; 4) temperature; and 5) light intensity. Another problem is the silt, sand and debris deposit on turf during a flood. Receding water may wash away the surface soil, exposing the root system. The chances of insect and diseases such as Pythium root rot may increase.

Soil deposits, salt and debris may be more of a problem in slow moving water. This debris, if found, should be removed immediately. Deposits of two inches or more should be removed or incorporated into the soil by vertical mowing such as dethatching or plowing. This is important to save the buried turf from dying. If the silt deposit is less than one inch, it may not cause permanent damage. Even in this case it is a good idea to remove as much as you can by gently washing the turf, or by vertical mowing or slicing to break the crust and allow air exchange and light penetration. Consider using a slicer seeder, dethatcher or aerifier to break the crust of silt or salt.

In addition to water-logging, submerged turf may show yellowing because of nitrogen deficiency or accumulation of some toxic bioproduct, etc. Flooding may also affect soil pH. It may increase the pH of acidic soil and decrease the pH of alkaline soil. **LM**



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Where Great Grass Begins

Flood repairs begin in Ohio, Kentucky

by TERRY MCIVER, Editor-in-chief

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—The river ran through, and then came the clean up.

The floods of 1997—another in what seem to have become annual, weather-related mishaps across the U.S.—hit southern Ohio, Indiana and northern Kentucky hard. Now, landscape companies and golf course superintendents are busy mopping up.

"Floyd's Fork Creek rose and covered 12 of our holes," says Tony Littrell, CGCS, Midland Trail Golf Course, Middletown, Ky., about 10 miles east of Louisville.

"We didn't have any major problems, a little bit of siltation, that kind of thing," says Littrell. "We'll have it cleaned up before the month's over. We're using our Sand Pro where it's dry enough to push the silt into piles, because it's too wet to get out there with loader tractors."

Littrell reports that most of the silt on the golf course was a high sand content, "and all that did was improve the soil. Some sand bunkers were completely washed out."

"Better to have a golf course in a flood prone area rather than a house," observes Mark Wilson, CGCS, of Valhalla Country Club, Louisville, Ky., site of last year's PGA Championship. Wilson reported the water was receding as of March 10.

Wilson assessed the situation by saying the course had "no real turf damage, but tons of debris."

The clean up is monumental, as silt, leaves, logs and the garbage that was left behind is scattered everywhere.

It was about a 10-day clean up job for Wilson. "There was as much as three inches of mud on the cart paths. The



Golf courses in Ohio and Kentucky were covered by flood waters at different times during the week, depending on location. Shown here is Valhalla in Louisville.

Turf aerification a priority after flooding

"Aerify, aerify, aerify," to reduce compaction and layering problems, says Dr. Bill Knoop, LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT technical editor, when asked what advice he would give superintendents at flooded golf courses.

"And remove aeration cores, if possible. You want to pick up as much of that silt as you can," advises Knoop, of Mt. Vernon, Texas.

"You've got to get oxygen into the root system, and allow carbon dioxide to escape."

On courses where the silt is deep enough to prevent light from reaching the plant for an extended period of time, "the war is probably over," suggests Knoop.

Weeds could become another major concern. "The river water brings in an incredible amount of weed seed," says Knoop.

So, how long can turf usually live underwater?

"It's a function of water, temperature, time, and turf variety," explains Knoop. "Some grasses do better than others. Generally, the warmer the water, the worse off they are.

"You have to be more concerned with bluegrasses. Bermuda will come up through asphalt!" The bunch types—ryegrasses, tall fescues—will have the toughest time surviving because of the way they spread, says Knoop.

"Bermuda, St. Augustine, zoysia, can handle this kind of adversity much better because of the way they grow. You can almost literally bury bentgrass and it will come up."

Trees will need attention, too, says Knoop.

"All root systems have to exchange gases. A tree is going to root in relationship to the soil texture. The heavier the soil, the root system will tend to be closer to the surface. If you seal that surface with silt or clay, you're going to kill that tree. It could be a year before you notice any damage."

T.M.



PHOTOS COURTESY MARK WILSON

Mark Wilson's Valhalla crew made bridge repair a priority.

bunkers were destroyed by the 11 inches of rain in two days. Basically, we're still working on bunkers one at a time. With the bunkers we're scraping the silt, trying to clean the contaminants out of the white sand.

"We lost the handrail on three concrete bridges," continues Wilson. Liability concerns made replacing the rails a priority, at a cost of \$5000. A thousand foot stretch of security fence was "flattened," says Wilson, and cost \$6000 to replace.

"It's all labor intensive," says Wilson. "You can't even get small carts to those wet areas."

Valhalla tees, fairways and greens are seeded with Penncross bentgrass. Roughs are bluegrass; long

roughs are fescue.

Wilson is able to find a silver lining in this cloud: mowing isn't a prime concern right now, since the turf's just getting started. And, he says, Valhalla uses "one of the best water tolerant grasses you can find," in bentgrass.

"Bentgrass is probably the best survivor underwater," says Wilson. "We were under water for three days, and there's no harmful effects on the turf."

Wilson had to hire workers from a temporary service to meet the need for extra labor. □

Leaf blower issue still swirls in Calif., NY, Ore.

The ban on leaf blowers is still an active issue in the green industry, as concerned professional users try to educate everyone from irresponsible operators to misinformed activists.

In November, Los Angeles City Council voted 9-3 to approve an ordinance banning the use of gasoline-powered leaf blowers within 500 feet of a residence. The ban takes effect on July 1, with a maximum fine of \$1000. Fifteen other California communities have banned the tools, and dozens of others have approved ordinances restricting their use, according to the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturers Association, Bethesda, Md.

Municipal governments in New York and Oregon are watching the Los Angeles events as they consider measures to respond to what is called "a growing concern over community noise."

It's the operator!

Michael Bellantoni of White Plains, NY, executive director of the New York State Turf and Landscape Association, and president of Michael Bellantoni, Inc., says the Association is considering filing a lawsuit to overturn a ban on leaf blowers in Scarsdale, NY, which, ironically, is the first city where the leaf blower was ever used. The Association had won an earlier ruling allowing professionals to use leaf blowers, but that ruling was overturned due to a procedural error.

"Leaf blowers are a lot quieter than many other powered tools," explains Bellantoni, who says that when the noise issue is challenged, anti-noise advocates change their tune, and say blowers contribute to the spread of carcinogens in the air.

"Limited use restricts work," says Bellantoni. The Association has suggested a compromise to the Village of Scarsdale instead of going to appeals court once again. "We want to seek a happy medium for the landscapers and Scarsdale," says Bellantoni.

That happy medium would be to restrict blower use to the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

"We would support a heavy penalty for any violators, without warnings," says Bellantoni.

A roundtable discussion sponsored by the Portable Power Equipment Manufacturer's Association took place in November, and included most manufacturers of two-cycle equipment.

"The ideas expressed spanned the spectrum of alternatives, including educating users in the industry to fighting the laws in the court system," says Larry Wilson, president of NYSTLA. "Many thought that a public relations campaign would help. Everyone agreed that unity was important." □



Bellantoni: fines for violators.

>HOT TOPICS**NTEP funds cut again**

BELTSVILLE, Md.—The United States Department of Agriculture has again cut funding for the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program, this time for fiscal year 1998.

The action took NTEP by surprise, especially after a successful green industry effort to restore funding in 1997.

"[USDA] took the same projects that were identified last year, and cut them again," says NTEP director, Kevin Morris.

"When the funding was restored last year, we actually got a five percent increase, to \$55,000. Then, they went and cut it again, the whole thing. If they don't set aside any money for us, we lose our connection to USDA, unless we want to pay them for rent, which we don't want to do and won't do."

Morris says the green industry is going to work on getting the money restored at the congressional level, but will also try to get a full-time position established at NTEP.

"That will help to keep us from getting cut in the future. It's easy to cut money when there's no employees attached to it, because you don't have to worry about putting them in a new position, retraining or relocating," suggests Morris, who is employed by the National Turfgrass Federation, a non-profit corporation, not by USDA.



Morris: NTEP 'out on a limb.'

The NTEP was started in 1980; its first manager was the late Jack Murray.

"When Jack retired in 1988, his position was cancelled," explains Morris, who has been with the program for nine years. The USDA has not had a full-time person in the turfgrass program since 1988.

"A couple years ago, all the projects within the agricultural research service were rated in terms of their importance. The administrators rated our project 'low,'" recalls Morris.

"They're using the same ratings now, to determine which projects to cut. We're still an easy target."

"USDA has at least 10 full-time scientists working in ornamentals," says Morris, "so it's not like the green industry doesn't have any support here. In fact, the ornamental people got \$200,000 additional funding for this fiscal year. The ornamental people have congressional support. They've put a good case forward, and the congressional people have agreed to it."

Green industry professionals are urged to contact their congressional representative to voice support for the NTEP/USDA cooperative effort.

"Let them know it's important to have that link between the USDA, the green industry and NTEP," says Morris. **LM**

Events**APRIL**

10-12: Landscape Maintenance Association Annual Equipment Show Roundup Palm Beach Airport Hilton, W. Palm Beach, Fla.; Fred Williams, (407) 672-0633.

22-23: Integrated Turfgrass Pest Management for Professionals University of California Extension, Davis, Calif. Call (916) 757-8899.

27-30: North American Snow Conference sponsored by the American Public Works Association, Kansas City, Mo.; (816) 472-6100; fax (816) 472-1610.

26-27: Leesburg Flower and Garden Festival Sponsored by Leesburg (Va.) Department of Parks and Recreation. Call (703) 777-1262.

30-May 5: Western Chapter ISA Conference Disneyland Pacific Hotel, Anaheim, Calif. Contact Western Chapter ISA at (916) 641-2990.

MAY

3-5: Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association Annual meeting, San Diego, Calif. Call (612) 758-5811; fax (612) 758-5813.

3-7: New York State Recreation & Park Society Conference Holiday Inn Sun Spree, Lake Placid, NY. Call Rob Marchiony (518) 584-0321; fax (518) 584-5101.

5-6: Florida Nurserymen & Growers Assn. Menninger Tree Conference Leu Gardens, Orlando, Fla. Contact Linda Vanderzee (407) 345-8137; fax (407) 351-2610.

5-7: Southeastern Turfgrass Conference 51st annual, Tifton, Ga. For more information contact Jeanne Werner (912) 386-3416; fax (912) 386-3822 or e-mail, jwerner@uga.cc.uga.edu.

7: Organizational Meeting for EETC Holiday Inn DFW Airport North, Irving (Dallas), TX. Contact Virgil Russell (512) 442-1788; fax (512) 442-1789.

12-18: American Society of Golf Course Architects Annual Meeting, Hotel Inter-Continental, Toronto. The Society celebrates its 50th birthday at this meeting. Contact the Society at (312) 372-7090.

14: North Carolina Turf & Landscape Research Field Day North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC. Call Gene Maples (910) 695-1333; fax, (910) 695-1222.

29-30: Color Magic—Florida Nurserymen & Growers Ass. sites in Kissimmee/Orlando. Linda Vanderzee (407) 345-8137; fax (407) 351-2610. **LM**

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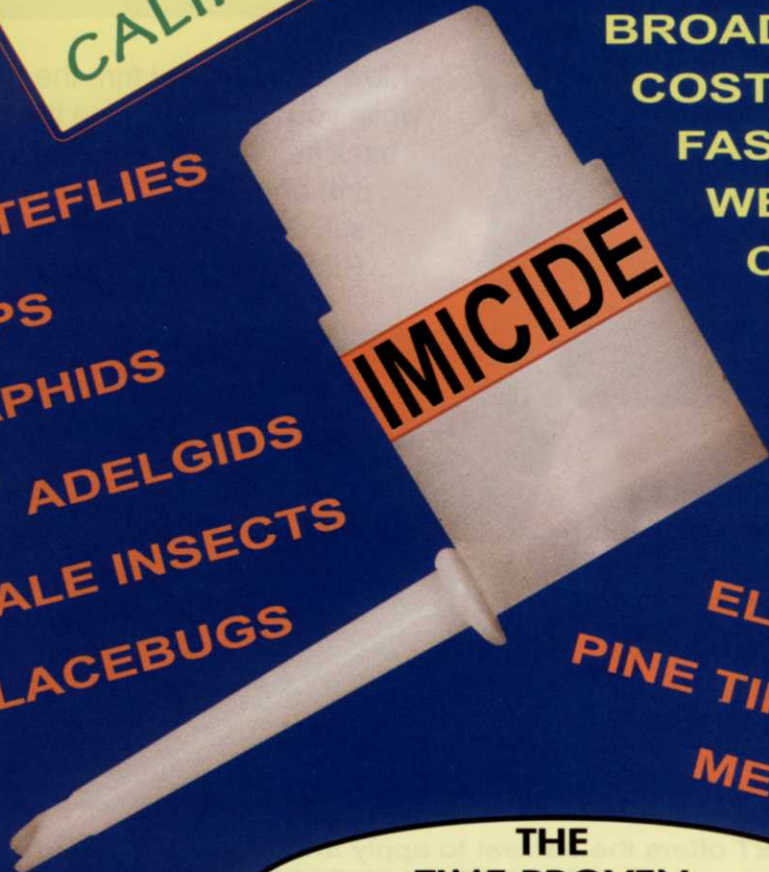
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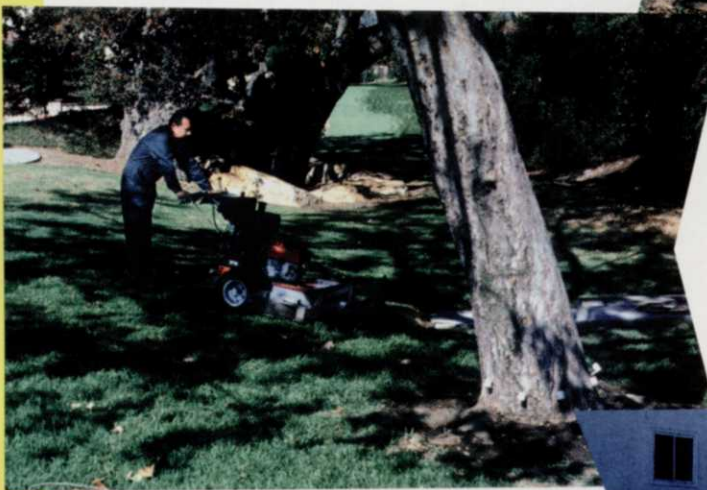
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Via mail, e-mail, fax, etc.

STMA says 'thanks for your support, LM'

This is a quick note to express my appreciation to you and all your staff for the support you have shown STMA over the years. I go back to the very beginning of the association, when you were "Weeds, Trees & Turf." I know we have gone through some personnel changes, but you people have always been supportive of our goals.

We have many successful programs in operation, but I think the one that will become

the most significant is our certification program. Once we have that in place and operational, we will be able to offer a great and much needed service to the industry.

*Mike Schiller
Superintendent of Parks
Rolling Meadows Park District,
Rolling Meadows, IL,
STMA president, 1996-97*

Thanks for the note, Mike. We appreciate STMA's concern for and dedication to improving athletic field management. LM plans to "stay in the game" with useful information for athletic field managers everywhere! —ed.

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ing TurfGrass TRENDS' reputation. What would make me satisfied as a reader is to see little change in TurfGrass TRENDS.

*F. Dan Dinelli, CGCS
North Shore Country Club
Glenview, IL*

Plans are to keep TurfGrass TRENDS as useful and up-to-date as it has always been, Dan. Agronomic information is high on our readers' list of priorities, and we plan to meet their needs with every issue! —ed.

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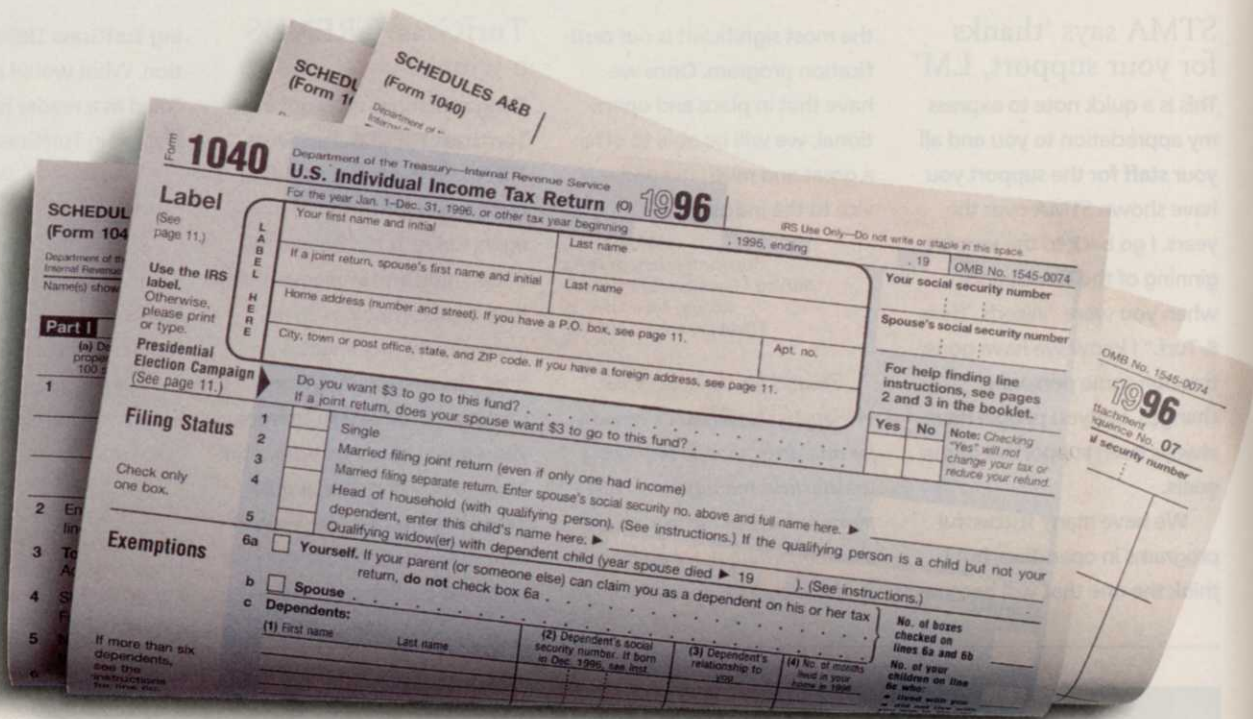
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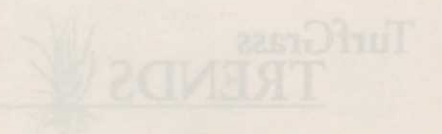
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