

TURF TWISTERS

LEAK THE WORD

Question: Periodically, our equipment malfunctions and we have a hydraulic oil leak that injures the turf. Any thoughts on what to do? (Kentucky)

Answer: If you are in the golf course business long enough, this problem will affect you sometime. An excellent piece of research was conducted on this problem and published in the 1980-1981 University of Kentucky Research Report. Basically, there is a need for speed in applying the proper type of soap or detergent to the grass. The suds, which pick up the oil, must be diluted with plenty of water or else removed to prevent damaging an even greater area. A shop Wet-Vac powered by a portable generator works well for this purpose. We have also seen good results where oil leaks have been treated with water-based degreasers (non-butyl) mixed with a wetting agent.

GRASS CLIPPINGS

Question: Our landfill will not accept grass clippings, so we have decided to return clippings to the fairways. Will this cause a thatch problem? (Michigan)

Answer: University studies have failed to link the return of turf clippings with thatch accumulation. When fairway mowing removes no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the grass blade, the clippings are small and decompose rapidly. Many superintendents drag a chain or hose across the fairways to disperse clumps of clippings that result from infrequent mowing or mowing of wet turf. You could also use manure spreaders to disperse clippings into rough areas (see the March/April 1989 GREEN SECTION RECORD). A third possibility would be to start a compost area and use the organic material on the golf course.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE EARTH

Question: Throughout the golf course I have certain areas where castings from earthworm activity create a real nuisance. What is the best solution to solve this problem? (Florida)

Answer: Earthworm activity is a sign of a healthy soil condition. Benefits from earthworm activity in the soil include improved soil structure, nutrient release, and actual thatch reduction. While castings from earthworms may cause problems with mowing equipment and playability, environmental awareness and the goal of pesticide reduction on the golf course discourage chemical control of this beneficial "pest."

Set a precedent in your area. Work around the problem areas. Wait until the castings dry and use a light drag mat or brush to disperse castings prior to mowing. Mowers won't be damaged and mowing quality will be maintained. Ask members for their patience in this matter. Inform everyone you are helping to protect the environment by using less pesticides.