

TURF TWISTERS

USE RULES

Question: At our golf course we are having a discussion about pull-carts. What are your recommendations regarding where pull-carts may or may not be taken and the suggested physical characteristics for pull-carts (i.e., width of wheels, weight, etc.)? (California)

Answer: To simplify policy, many courses enforce the same rules for pull-carts as for riding golf carts, i.e., carts must be kept on the paths or at least 30 feet away from all tees and greens. The reason is that the tees and greens are the most sensitive and heavily trafficked areas on the golf course. Since pull-carts are smaller and more easily maneuvered, golfers tend to bring them onto the tees, pull them in the narrow gap between greenside bunkers and the putting surface, and even park them on the edge of the greens. Wear patterns develop as the pull-carts repeatedly trample the same place. Rules for these carts should take into account common sense and good course etiquette. Consider the following:

- Pull-carts should have wide wheels (approximately 4" or more). The heavier battery-operated carts are fine as long as they have relatively wide wheels to displace the weight.
- Pull-carts should be kept a reasonable distance from greens and tees, and they should never be parked on the tees or greens. Fifteen to 30 feet is normally sufficient.
- To prevent turf damage and rutting, pull-carts should never be pulled across excessively wet areas.
- Pull-carts should be directed around greenside bunkers and should never be taken in the narrow gap between the green and surrounding bunkers.

TO CALIBRATE

Question: During the summer months, I often find it necessary to hand water localized dry areas on the greens. I also have noted that these areas are in the same location year after year. While in some cases the need for extra water can be attributed to the slope of the putting surface, the vast majority seem to be located on mostly level ground. Do you think the application of a wetting agent would be helpful? (Illinois)

Answer: Wetting agents can be very helpful in the fight against localized dry spots, but before making the first application, it may be time to check the water distribution pattern of the irrigation system. If the sprinkler heads are improperly spaced, some areas may be getting too much water and others too little. Also, don't be fooled by eyeballing the irrigation system. Worn nozzles can cause uneven water distribution even though the sprinklers are covering from head to head. The easiest way to check the water distribution pattern is to place plastic cups on 5-foot centers across the entire surface of a green and turn on each sprinkler for at least 15 minutes.

THE COMPETITION

Question: My kikuyugrass fairways tend to scalp every year around the middle of July. I'm mowing five days a week and keeping the cutting height up around $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Is there anything else I can do to prevent scalping? (California)

Answer: Kikuyugrass has a very aggressive growth rate and will seem to jump out of the ground overnight in midsummer. Scalping tends to be worse in drought-prone areas, so aerification and spot watering are important programs during the summer. Another effective program is to gradually increase mowing heights throughout the growing season. For example, you can begin mowing at $\frac{7}{16}$ " in April and May as the grass breaks dormancy, then increase the cutting height $\frac{1}{16}$ " each month to a final cutting height of $\frac{3}{4}$ " in October. This maintenance program not only helps reduce scalping, but also builds additional pad on the fairways going into winter.