

Turf Twisters



Q: As the green committee chairman at our course, I am responsible for communicating with the membership with regard to problems that

occur on our golf course. This spring, our bermudagrass fairways are severely infected by spring dead spot disease, which takes a large

portion of our growing season to heal. Our superintendent states that spring dead spot is difficult to predict and control. Is this true? (Virginia)

A: Spring dead spot is an increasing problem in much of the transition zone. The severity of the disease is based on many factors, including traffic on dormant or semi-dormant fairways, fall weather, and bermudagrass variety. The disease actually infects the grass during the fall; however, the

damage from the disease is not evident until bermudagrass breaks dormancy in the spring. The effectiveness of fungicides is variable and costly, and it can be difficult to time fungicide applications properly. Cultural controls include limiting fall traffic on bermudagrass, and maintaining acidic soil pH. Nonetheless, spring dead spot can occur in spite of chemical and cultural programs targeted for its control.

Q: I have new greens (five months since seeding) but still have some small bare areas and thin spots that have not yet filled in. Is there a trick to fill in these areas besides sodding or plugging? (Oklahoma)

A: If the spot is about 6" or less, simply use a cup cutter and insert it into the ground, as you would changing a cup, one half over the bare spot. Then rotate the plug 180° and pull out the cup cutter. The smaller spots

remaining will be filled in very quickly. On a slightly larger spot, this can be done on both sides. This method leaves the area smooth and is very labor friendly compared to plugging.

Q: Should every green on a golf course receive the same light topdressing program? (Washington)

A: Although light topdressing can be very beneficial, greens in heavy shade do not produce the same amount of organic material as those in full sun. If all of your greens are lightly topdressed equally, this can result in "explosions"

of ball marks that are virtually unfixable and very firm surfaces during the summer months on shaded greens. Superintendents who have slightly reduced their topdressing amounts on shaded greens have had very good

results by allowing more organic material to accumulate near the surface, resulting in ball marks that are more easily repaired and greens that react like those in full sun.