

Turf Twisters

Q: Our golf course has ant mounds on the edges of the putting greens, and they don't seem to go away during the growing season. Why are these ants a problem, and where do they come from? (North Carolina)

A: The ants you see building mounds on the green surface near the perimeter of the greens are worker ants and have a scientific name of *Lasius neoniger*. The worker ants forage for food on the putting green edges since the mowers kill cutworms and

earthworms. The worker ants take food to the main nest by excavating and digging through the sand rootzone and going through chambers. Small piles of sand come to the surface during this excavating operation. The main underground nest is usually located just outside the green collar areas in native soil. Based on research at the University of Kentucky, superintendents should focus their ant control measures around the perimeter of greens, from 6 feet inside the collar to 6-12



feet outside of the greens. In most cases it is unnecessary to treat the whole green. The best time to treat is during the early spring, after the

mounds first appear, because at that time the new colonies are still small, and established colonies have been weakened from over-wintering.

Q: Our Tifdwarf bermudagrass putting greens are now 18 years old. Due to a high percentage of off-type contaminants, it has become very difficult to provide an acceptable play and aesthetic character. Resurfacing the greens is scheduled for the

summer, and converting to an ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivar is being given strong consideration. What is the track record with the ultradwarfs as far as surface stability and occurrence of off-types? (Florida)

A: The ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars have been in use for 8 to 10 years now and so far they have exhibited a more stable character. Typically, with Tifdwarf greens, off-type areas

become apparent within 5 to 7 years after turf establishment. To date, no off-type areas have been observed with ultradwarf putting greens.

Q: There are a number of different types of ball mark repair tools on the market. Does the USGA recommend a specific type of repair tool? (Kentucky)

A: Although sales representatives may argue that their tool is the best, a good job can be done with a variety of different styles. Along with the obvious need to restore and re-smooth the

playing surface, repairing a ball mark immediately is far more important than the tool being used. Conversely, delaying the repair will compromise turf recovery and playability, regardless of the

tool being used. Refer your golfers to the ball mark repair animation located on the USGA Web site at: www.usga.org/turf/articles/educational_video_clips.html.

