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Keep your weeds at bay by maintaining strong Turfgrass

Weeds in turfgrass are unavoidable and can be difficult to treat. Although there are products out there to control them, such as Longbow® from Bayer which is now approved for Speedwell control, it's important to reduce the chances of weeds invading turfgrass in the first place.

A dense, vigorously growing, competitive stand will resist weeds, according to Dave Orchard from Bayer. Integrated weed management focuses on selecting, establishing, and maintaining a competitive standard of grass. And, while it's difficult to eliminate all weeds from turf, in well maintained cases it's possible to prevent large irregular patches of weeds, which both make it unattractive, and reduce its utility.

The main objective for turf managers is to keep weed populations below levels that are incompatible with the purpose of the turf, according to Dave. "The first step is preparing the site properly and choosing an appropriate turfgrass species for the location, followed by cultural practices that contribute to turf health: proper irrigation, mowing, fertilization, thatch removal, and aeration. Improved turf health allows grass to recover more quickly, and withstand insect, disease, and nematode damage," he says.

Healthy turf also out-competes weeds and reduces any chance of them becoming established. "Herbicides are used as tools in turf management where high quality turf is required: however, their use should be integrated with a good cultural program," says Dave.

Turfgrass can be established and maintained to discourage weeds in the turf, or to decrease the chances of weed invasion. "Any condition that exposes the soil surface to additional light makes that area more susceptible to weeds. Factors that contribute to poor turf health include overwatering or underwatering, mowing too low or too high, excessive wear, disease or insect damage, soil compaction and excessive shading," advises Dave.

In order to ensure turf health is at its optimum level, there needs to be a balance between these factors. And grass nutrition and irrigation must be well balanced, to ensure a tight knit sward. "If the grass is thick like a carpet, weed seeds can't land and germinate. Good turf management practices should discourage weeds from coming in because you have more grass," says Dave.



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If you do have weeds, herbicides can be used, but must be applied carefully and accurately, as part of a good overall turf management programme. “Before applying a herbicide, such as Longbow® from Bayer, carefully refer to the label for conditions of use. Pay particular attention to application rates, methods and precautions.

“When using any herbicide for the first time, apply at the recommended rate on a limited area to make sure it’s successful under local conditions. Excessive rates, improper timing, or application errors of selective herbicides can injure or kill good turf. Insufficient application, on the other hand, usually results in failure or incomplete weed control,” warns Dave.

It’s also important to remember that herbicide formulations can change, and it’s crucial for turf managers to be aware of changes and new approvals.

One such recent approval change is to Longbow®. It’s now approved for the control of Speedwell (*Veronica spp.*) in amenity turf, as a result of a label extension.

“Speedwell is a troublesome weed that’s well-known for its resilience and difficulty to control,” says Dave.

“There are a limited number of products with Speedwell on the label. Speedwell control can be a particular issue for greenkeepers, given its ability to root quickly, even from small sections, meaning it can get out of hand fast if untreated, and spread across greens and fairways. Speedwell is also difficult to treat because of its small leaves.

“In a market where selective herbicides are diminishing, we’re confident that this improved label for Longbow® will come as welcome news to greenkeepers,” Dave adds.

Last year, the industry saw selective herbicides vanishing at an alarming rate, and many have not been reapproved for this year.

This has reduced the greenkeeper’s range of options when combating weeds, and has the potential to weaken every-day defences against the common weeds.



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Longbow® provides broad spectrum weed control for all areas of golf courses including greens and tees. The product can be used to treat common weeds such as Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Clovers (*Trifolium spp*), and Knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare*).

In addition to the approval for Speedwell application, the updated label now states a reduction in application rate, dropping from 10l/ha to 7.5l/ha. This means less is needed to treat a wider area and, for ease of use, it's now approved for tractor-mounted application. This means that treating weeds will be easier and more effective.

Longbow® can be applied to all turf, sports and amenity grasslands and lawns from April to September when weeds are actively growing, and can be applied via a knapsack sprayer or a tractor mounted boom sprayer.

“The formulation of Longbow® allows uptake through both the leaves and the roots,” says Dave. “This two-pronged attack provides robust weed control and effectiveness against a wide range of turf weeds. The 5 litre bottle pack size will remain the same, but now the treatment goes further,” says Dave.

The news of this label extension is fantastic for greenkeepers, but it's important that they instil good turf management practice.

“The healthier and thicker the grass, the less likely you are to have weeds. Good turf management practices should discourage weeds from coming in the first place,” adds Dave.

