



Bayer

Minimising autumn and winter turf stress

Bayer's Colin Mumford discusses ways to minimise turf stress during the autumn and winter months.

Turfgrass is a living organism and is subjected to elements which can lead to stress, these factors include; player and machinery traffic wear, environment and the management activities undertaken to produce a quality playing surface. Stress to the grass plant leads to poor health, making it more susceptible to disease infection. Identifying the causes of stress enables greenkeepers to minimise, cure or avoid these stress factors.

Some key stress factors:

Mowing: blunt blades tear the grass leaf tips creating a wound with a large surface area, this increases the potential for disease to penetrate the grass plant. For putting greens, ideally maintain a height of cut greater than 4.5 mm through the autumn and winter months and keep cutting blades sharp to minimise leaf tip damage.

Dew control: most diseases thrive in moist conditions; keeping surfaces as dry as possible through regular switching or brushing to knock dew off the leaf will help keep the leaf as dry as possible.

Drainage: check drainage inspection chambers and outlets to ensure adequate drainage is achieved. Improve surface water infiltration by spiking the surface with a light 'sarel' roller or by undertaking aeration if the weather conditions are suitable.

Light and airflow: shade and poor airflow will help emphasise the moist conditions that need to be avoided. Dense tree and shrub canopies can reduce light levels, even in the winter when the leaves have fallen off deciduous trees. Conditions can be improved by thinning dense tree canopies, but always seek advice from a qualified arborist or tree surgeon before undertaking any thinning work.

Insecticide: Chafer grubs and Leatherjackets feed on the grass plants roots, causing it to die back and exhibit straw coloured leaves. Assess the turf to decide if control, with an approved insecticide, is necessary.



Bayer

Fungicide: Routinely inspect the turf for the early signs of disease. If present, apply a fungicide promptly to cure or halt further spread. When disease is not controlled quickly, turf displays unsightly scarring until it grows out with the spring growth. During historically high disease pressure periods or when significant snowfall is anticipated, it may be prudent to apply a fungicide as a preventative measure. Always read the label to make sure the fungicide has approval for use for the time of year it will be applied.

