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Turf managers urged to use the weather forecast to help them maintain playing surfaces this spring.

Turf managers must use all the tools available to them, including the long-range weather forecast, in order to ensure playing surfaces are in tip-top condition going into spring.

That's the advice from Bayer's Dr Colin Mumford, who says managers can't afford not to look at the weather forecast as it can dictate so many different things – the windows of opportunity for spraying, re-seeding and maintenance, for example.

“Early control is the key for disease control,” he says. “The sooner you treat, the less likely it is that the playing surface will be affected.”

He suggests turf managers do not delay spraying when early disease indications become apparent. “Delaying fungicide applications can be a risky policy as, if there's a sudden change in the weather and you can't get out with the sprayer, you can easily get caught out, and end up watching helplessly as the disease takes hold and spreads across your playing surfaces.”

Microdochium patch (commonly referred to as Fusarium) and Grey Snow Mould are two key diseases to watch out for, and Colin advises that turf should be examined every day for any sign of either. “If the long-term forecast says the weather will be alright, then it's credible to hold back. If not, don't take a chance.”

Turf managers should be looking for early signs of disease, with preventative, rather than curative treatments vital to ensure the best playing surfaces throughout the year.

Colin urges everyone to be prepared for increased threats resulting from a relatively mild winter in most areas, and also notes the importance of a planned approach to treatment.

“Where conditions are conducive to disease, leaving turf that shows symptoms of a disease or turf stress for as little as five days to 'see how it goes', can result in a rampant outbreak.



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“Spraying turf prior to disease symptoms being evident, in other words, preventative treatment, should be based on the environmental conditions, historical disease threat and knowledge of the turf. Curative sprays should take place as soon as any symptoms are seen.

He notes that where there are budget constraints, preventative treatments are often avoided to save spending money where there is not yet a need. However, Colin says treatment programmes must be based on a combination of weather information, visual assessments and knowledge of the playing surfaces’ reaction to certain environmental conditions.

“If it’s left until the disease takes hold of the turf, an eradicated treatment will be necessary. This is more likely to lead to scarring which, during the winter and early spring months, will take longer to grow out.”

Colin adds that the industry is now reviewing and assessing weather data more effectively, enabling individuals to make a more informed decision. “With all the technical advances today, there is a greater awareness of risk factors. This, combined with knowledge of the playing surfaces and coupled with a planned approach, managers are in a strong position for effective and efficient integrated disease control this season.”

The two key diseases greenkeepers need to look out for are Microdochium patch and Grey Snow Mould.

Microdochium patch is first noticed when the turf manager sees small brown and yellow patches, and the turf looks greasy or watery, and feels slimy to the touch. These small patches enlarge rapidly, joining up, and large areas of grass die back. After snow cover it has a pink tinge and is referred to as Pink Snow Mould.

“Sward composition is important here, if you have predominantly annual meadow-grass, the chances are you will be seeing more die back. With a fescue or bent mix, there may not be quite the same issue.

“What’s important to remember is that members want 100 per cent grass cover that looks nice and plays well. More importantly, any disease can cause a dip in the canopy due to the turf dying back, which on a green can mean a poorer putting surface and can affect the roll of the ball. The majority of golf courses, for example, are heavily dependent on green fees, so attracting and keeping players, who appreciate the good surface, is vital.”



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Grey Snow Mould can be caused by a covering on the turf, of either snow or leaves, which create a cold and wet environment. Once the snow has thawed, or the area has been cleared, grey, circular patches will be visible on the turf.

“My advice is to keep an eye on the long-range weather forecast and act accordingly,” says Colin. “Turf managers can’t afford not to pay this attention – the weather forecast dictates so many things and is an essential tool in any maintenance routine.”

He urges managers to keep surfaces as dry as possible this spring, understanding that disease thrives in damp and wet conditions. Remove the dew from the grass leaves, daily or even several times a day if the weather is misty or foggy.

Turf should be examined every day for any sign of disease, and action taken straight away if anything is spotted. “Early control is key,” he says. “The sooner a threat is spotted, and action taken, the less likelihood of scarring on the surface.”

Bayer’s Interface® is designed to be a turf manager’s core rotational product. “The beauty of this fungicide is that it can be used to address almost any eventuality. It has label recommendations for the control of six different turf diseases so its flexibility is tremendous.

“The combination of the two active ingredients in Interface® - iprodione and trifloxystrobin – cover two different fungicide chemical classes and therefore offer control at any stage of the disease’s development.

Interface® with StressGard™ Formulation Technology has been developed over 15 years to fine tune and upgrade product performance. StressGard™ Formulation Technology enhances the ability of Interface® to deliver turf health benefits by augmenting plant physiology so turf fights stress and performs better.

According to Colin, Interface® offers a new standard in turf protection and is proving to be an exciting addition to Bayer’s turf fungicide portfolio. Colin adds, “The majority of fungicides only have one mode of action, whilst Interface® is a dual action fungicide - this also means that it can reduce the potential for disease resistance to occur.”



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Turf manager checklist:

- ✓ Look at turf daily and be ready to take immediate action as soon as any disease threat is spotted;
- ✓ Use the long range weather forecast as a key management tool;
- ✓ Use prevention rather than cure when you plan your integrated disease management programme;
- ✓ Keep turf on playing surfaces as dry as possible – especially during misty and foggy periods.

