

BMP'S FOR TEXAS FIELD MANAGERS DURING COVID-19

THIS DOCUMENT SERVES AS A GUIDE FOR BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR SPORTS FIELD MANAGERS IN TEXAS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS. IT FOCUSES ON MAXIMIZING PLANT HEALTH AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES TO REDUCE PLANT STRESS. THE HEALTH OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY IS THE TOP PRIORITY AND WE RECOMMEND FOLLOWING ALL GUIDELINES TO KEEP YOURSELF AND OTHERS SAFE. TOGETHER, WE WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THIS.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE TIPS

- Nitrogen fertilizer enhances shoot growth. Although important in transition time, unnecessary applications should be avoided. If applications must be made, consider the use of a slow-release product.
- Mowing is our most essential practice at this time. Consider raising mowing heights to reduce mowing events and increase competitiveness against stresses. Consider the use of PGR's to decrease the number of mowing events and always follow the 1/3 rule.
- Irrigate to reduce wilting, excessive growth, and periods of leaf wetness which can lead to disease. If you must irrigate, early morning irrigation between 3:00 am-9:00 am is recommended. Consider monitoring soil moisture before adding supplemental irrigation.

DISEASE AND INSECT CONTROL

Disease

- Soil temperatures drive a lot of disease activity, therefore close monitoring is important for successful use of fungicides and disease prevention.
- When possible, use systemic fungicides to provide longer residual control than contact.
- Preventative spring fungicide applications, specifically root infecting pathogens, is critical. Ex: Fairy Ring (55-60°F in soil at 2") and *Pythium* root rot (60-65°F in soil at 2").

Insects

- Preventative treatments for white grubs and mole crickets are critical for successful control. Recommended treatment windows are generally May-July depending on your location within the state. Other insects can be controlled as they appear.
- Other nuisance insects, such as fire ants, can be controlled at this time. ~70° soil temperatures are ideal for fire ant foraging and bait application.

WEED CONTROL

- Summer annual weeds are upon us. Crabgrass and goosegrass germinate at approximately 57° and 60° in the soil, respectively. In many places in the state, it may seem too late for an initial pre- application but some effective control is still possible. Consider a late initial or sequential pre-application to extend annual weed control with products that have pre- and post- control activity. Consider tank mixing.
- Winter annual seed management is crucial at this time. If you have mature, winter weeds consider bagging and removing clippings off-site to prevent the spread of seed. Post-emergent chemical control may be ineffective on mature weeds that have seeded.

MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Aeration** is an essential practice to reduce soil compaction, allow gas exchange, and increase infiltration. Consider hollow-tine aeration for both decompaction and dethatching. Aeration will aid in preparing our fields for heavy use that is likely to occur when sports resume.
- **Ryegrass transition** is upon us. This is the perfect time to transition your ryegrass to reduce competition with desirable plants. If budget allows, spray out ryegrass with a transition aid or use a mechanical practice such as scalping or fraise mowing.
- **Fraise mowing** is a technique that utilizes hundreds of blades to remove material from the surface. This can lead to removal of unwanted weeds (poa), organic matter/thatch, aid in ryegrass transition, and an overall healthier turfgrass stand. Rhizomatous turfgrass can recover in a matter of days or weeks depending on the aggressiveness of the unit.
- Do not overlook small maintenance items if you have time. Considerations like lip and edge management, dirt work on baseball and softball fields, and replacing worn areas is warranted if time allows.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Effective communication is vital during this time to administrators, staff, and end-users.
- Communicating field conditions and expectations of field use when sports are allowed to resume is important for field safety measures.
- Field safety is the top priority of a field manager. Burst of heavy field usage is likely when sports resume and may be troublesome for field quality, safety, and repair budgets. Please continue to practice sanitation practices of equipment for user safety.