June 2025 Newsletter
Managing your greens in Winter

During the winter months when the turf grasses growth is very limited, it is important to manage your green efficiently.

Following an often-busy summer period, it is likely that the bowling green will have stressed or bare areas which need to be protected from further damage, and treated to effect repair.

In addition, the Greenkeeper also has to contend with the problems associated with the winter period, such as early morning dewfall, worm casts, increased rainfall and low temperatures.

Faced with these difficulties, there are number things the Greenkeeper can do.

MOWING PRACTICES

- **Reduce mowing and increase brushing** – During the winter months it is only really necessary to cut a green once or twice a week. It is often more beneficial is to replace the cutting with brushing. This will achieve a couple of things. The first is to maintain the speed of the green, and the second is the removal of dead grass, thus preventing it from composting, and making the green spongy underfoot. Brushing will also help prevent the accumulation of dead grass on the edges of low spots on the green following heavy rainfall. Leaving dead grass lying on top of live grass reduces the plants photosynthesis potential, and can lead to permanent damage if left in place for any extended period of time.

- **Lift the mower or brush when going over weak areas on the green** – Any weak areas on the green benefit from not being cut during the winter months so as to allow what growth there is to be maximised. Lifting a brush over a weak area prevents any further damage to that area.

- **Increase cutting height** – Raising the cutting height to 5 mm will have little impact on the speed of the green during the winter months, but this increase in exposed leaf area will greatly assist the grass plants strength.

- **Restrict the mowing of the perimeter of the green between the ditch and two metre mark** - This is the area of a green that receives the greatest amount of foot traffic, and is also the least played upon area of a rink. In effect, the Greenkeeper will create a picture frame pattern on the green.

- **Avoid cutting or brushing a green when its wet** – Cutting wet grass increases the chances of damaging the grass plant. Causing damage in cold wet conditions increases the chances of disease. Using a brush when the green is wet will largely negate the usefulness of the process, since a wet surface limits the removal of any dead grass.

MANAGING THE GREEN

- **Move the rinks more often** – When the grass surface is softer due to the increased wetness of the soil, moving the rinks at least once a week, if not more often, will reduce the chances of damage to the grass plant. It will also obviate the chances of adversely affecting the greens levels.

- **Manage the use of the rinks** – This can be done in two ways, either by removing a rink from play, or alternatively reducing the number of rinks available for play. During the colder weather, the number of players actually playing reduces, therefore is it necessary to have all six rinks laid out for tabs-in?

- **Manage the use of a green after it rains** – Consider creating a template of rules that will determine how long after it stops raining the green can be used. If this approach is adopted, ensure that the Club's Management Committee buy in to the "rules".

- **Remove worm cast from the green prior to the use of a machine or play** – Whilst it is generally accepted that the presence of earthworms in the soil of a green is beneficial, dealing with wormcasts in the winter months is essential in preventing them from being ground into the grass surface, either by the use of a machine's roller, or by players walking them in. If the green suffers badly from wormcasts, it is possible to treat the green to reduce the incidence of worm activity.

- **Use organic or soluble fertilizers only** – If the Greenkeeper identifies a need to fertilize during the winter month, use organic or soluble fertilizers only. This stops the need to water in the fertilizer, when the soil conditions are already wet. Too much water can be equally be as dangerous to the grass plant as too little water.

- **Move the 2m mark to 3m** – This will ensure that there is less play and foot-traffic in the area in front of the banks. This will avoid grass damage and over-compaction of the wet soil in this busy area.