

The hidden bugs destroying our turf



You may have noticed areas of damaged and turned over turf appearing around your course. What is the cause of this unsightly mess and is there anything greenkeepers can do to prevent it?



Fairways, tees and greens can all provide a habitat for a wide range of insect species, most of which are very beneficial to the turf ecosystem.

However, some, such as chafer (May bug) and crane fly (leatherjacket or daddy longlegs) have larvae which live in the soil and eat the roots of grass.

This damages the turf, but the wider disruption you're likely to have spotted is caused by predators such as badgers, foxes, crows and other birds, digging up the turf in search of insect grubs to eat.

Prior to 2017, greenkeepers were able to use soil-acting insecticides to manage the populations of larvae for both crane fly and chafer. But with increasing requirements to protect the environment, operators and bystanders, these products are no longer available for use in the EU and the UK.

This means there remains no direct options for greenkeepers to protect their course from the damage resulting from infestations of these larvae.

We ask golfers to understand why certain areas of the course may become damaged, and what greenkeepers can do to mitigate this.

Working alongside BIGGA and other major industry bodies, greenkeepers are investigating alternative means of managing insect and predator populations to avoid further damage. One example is how larvae numbers can be reduced by creating a hostile environment, such as by rolling and coring or tining the turf.

An alternative method is the introduction of beneficial nematodes, a species of roundworm. When the insects are at their early stages of development they are susceptible to predation by nematodes. However, a specific set of turf conditions is required for this to be a success, and not every golf course is suitable.

It is important to remember that your greenkeeping team will be doing everything possible to keep the course in prime condition. However, they cannot act outside the law and must keep within very strict guidelines when it comes to using insecticides. Your patience and understanding is requested during times of severe turf damage.

For more information, please contact:

Name:

Position:

Contact Details:

