

WORMCASTS

The real story behind the trails

Earthworms are considered a beneficial species due to the good work they do recycling nutrients within the soil. However, the small piles of soil left above the surface can cause difficulties for both greenkeepers and golfers and so products were previously used to discourage their populations in key areas of the golf course. As of 2017, these products are no longer available, leaving greenkeepers with a dilemma as to how to discourage them.



Problems caused by large numbers of wormcasts include:

- Unsightly and numerous casts
- Collection on soles of shoes
- Uneven playing surfaces and adversely affected ball roll
- Casts encourage weed seeds and germination
- Damage to bottom blades of mowers
- Casts alter the height of cut, due to build-up on mower front rollers, providing a less consistent putting surface
- Smearing after mowing
- Casts smother finer leafed grasses
- Problems with machinery

Alternative methods for controlling or suppressing earthworms are labour intensive, potentially costly and with no guarantee of success.

Options include:

- Cultural practices to remove food sources
- Lowering volumetric water content in the soil via improved drainage and/or use of penetrants
- Lowering the pH of the soil
- Introducing abrasive material via topdressing that will irritate the worms
- Encouraging bird populations that feed on excessive numbers.

Unfortunately for many golf courses, the management of worm casts is a long process requiring a range of different strategies. It is important that golfers understand this and exercise patience as the greenkeeping team seeks to reduce the impact as much as possible.

For more information, please contact:

Name:

Position:

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