

As per the State Government's advice surrounding the COVID-19 Outbreak, one of four reasons for leaving your home at this time can be for work that is essential.

Bowls Victoria in conjunction with the Greens Committee are firmly of the opinion that all greens (both Grass and Synthetic) need to be maintained although no bowls are currently allowed, and clubs are closed (as per advice from Bowls Australia: bowls.com.au/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-to-ba-members).

Both natural and synthetic greens require regular maintenance most particularly greens that are older than five years of age. The main issue then becomes drainage, poor drainage causes algae and moss to grow, causing damage to all natural and synthetic surfaces and the sub-base.

Before commencing work on the greens please review the current restrictions that apply in your circumstance as a volunteer, employee or as a contractor. The current restriction of two people (non-related) would be able to be adhered to by all clubs in maintaining greens. Social distancing would be able to be achievable each scenario.

Please ensure you always strictly adhere to Government Guidelines including Local, State and Federal Government Regulations and regularly review them at: coronavirus.vic.gov.au

Grass Greens

Bent Grass

These greens should be undergoing renovation and fertilisation now and, from mid-May, should be cut two to three times per week during their main winter growing season. Therefore, during the period from April to October constant work is required to maintain these greens including, weed eradication, disease control and de-thatching and being cut at least twice per week. Rolling of the green, cleaning and raking of ditches could be left off the work schedule.

Grass surrounds would also need to be maintained otherwise weeds and noxious grasses could be blown onto the green, requiring more expense in weed and disease control. Reducing the time in maintaining the greens over this period would mean that Bent Grass Greens would not be ready for the start of Pennant. It is anticipated that remedial work would take up to six to eight weeks to bring these greens into order, if the greens are not maintained to an appropriate standard. The grass will undergo a lot less stress if left slightly longer and should assist root growth.

Couch Grass

These greens are more difficult to maintain than Bent grass greens due to the types of disease that can attack them. The majority of greens would most likely have been refurbished during the warmer summer months, and by mid-May, be heading into inactivity. From now to mid-May a green keeper would be required to maintain a green at least twice a week, thereafter during its inactivity period one day per week may be sufficient. Grass surrounds would also need to be maintained otherwise weeds and noxious grasses could be blown onto the green requiring more expense in weed and disease control. If the greens are not maintained it is anticipated that remedial work would take up to six weeks to bring the greens into order. These types of greens are sometimes slippery at the start of the season and with limited chance to aerate the surface these greens could become unplayable until mid-November.

There are three main types of synthetic greens: sand infill greens, woven carpet greens and needle-punch greens. Each surface has different characteristics and maintenance requirements. The contractors that installed the greens would have provided each club with a maintenance schedule requiring certain works to be undertaken at regular intervals. In most instances the warranty period is seven years for the material and lesser period for defects in work, including the base. A breach by the club in adhering to the required maintenance could lead to a warranty ceasing to exist.

These three types of greens have specific maintenance requirements, however to generalise; the newer the green (for example a green that is up to 12 months old) has limited chance that moss and algae would be present in the surface and porosity should be adequate to allow drainage and surface water to disperse reducing effect of contaminants being held in the surface. Greens up to 5 years of age should be treated straight away (April) to reduce algae blooms and moss and fungus. Then after seven to ten days the green should be groomed, brushed or vacuumed to remove the dead moss and algae. A club with a green over 5 years old should repeat this process in a further six weeks (June).

If a green is not maintained during this period, simple things such as leaves and other organic matter staying on the surface during Autumn and Winter will act as a host for algae and moss to grow, cause discolouration and when bowls restarts the surface will be slippery due to the contaminants being on the surface and held between the fibres causing a substantial slowing of the porosity of the green. Other factors to consider while greens are closed include ants living and tunnelling under the surface, which will require the ditches to be sprayed with a surface spray on a weekly basis. Also required will be the removal of bird and animal droppings from the surface on a regular basis as well as checking for signs of vermin living or burrowing in and around the greens

The surrounds of the greens should be maintained at least once a month as a minimum.

Frequently Asked Questions:

My club has been shut down due to COVID-19, does my club still need a greenskeeper?

Our recommendation is yes, one greenskeeper should be able to complete essential work at the club to ensure good maintenance practices and upkeep of greens for the recommended guidelines above.

Does my greenskeeper need to be coming into the club each day?

Only if necessary, and preferably staying outdoors where possible. The government's advice is to still continue to stay home unless essential work needs to be done.

Greenskeepers will be maintaining greens at a reduced intensity compared to normal.

How do we protect our green if we can't do the maintenance ourselves or our current greenkeeper is unavailable?

In the first instance contact the Victorian Greenkeepers Association (vicgreenies@victga.com), Bowls Victoria Greens Committee (bvgreens@gmail.com) or your local council for advice and assistance. A nearby club would also be a great source of advice.

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