



## Why Now, Not Later

*The many reasons private clubs should invest in IPM...*

*Golf course superintendents have, in some form or another, been applying integrated pest management techniques (IPM) to managing their properties forever. I would say, however, that the vast majority have been informal approaches to IPM, as opposed to formal Integrated Pest Management programs.*

As a very flexible management tool that allows you to set thresholds for pests (weeds, diseases, insects) acceptable for your facility, a formalized IPM program can benefit a golf operation in numerous ways. It can help to identify specific hot spots on your course that may require intensive approaches to pest control while negating the perceived necessity for broadcast applications. It will promote a holistic approach to dealing with difficult growing environments, leading to cultural rather than chemical solutions. It will provide accurate records that will document successes and failures which in



turn will support the need for alternate approaches to problem solving. It can drive a communication initiative for members, potential members or the surrounding community about your efforts to maintain the course with the environment as a primary concern. And, of course, it will satisfy one of the components required for certification as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.

With the introduction of the IPM Accreditation Program in Ontario, the process can be taken to the next level with the involvement of a third party to audit your program. At Bayview Golf & Country Club we have voluntarily taken this most formal approach to the process and I would highly recommend that all golf facilities do so as well.

### IT'S YOUR TURN

As part of next year's budget process, consider the inclusion of resources to address this approach to IPM. Simply put, I believe it is the most significant proactive thing we can do to protect our businesses from undo regulatory pressures.

The financial implications of committing to this program are up to the individual club to determine, and while at least ten hours per week are required for basic scouting and record



keeping, there is an abundance of bright, young educated men and women in our business who are craving some additional responsibility. I would suggest that designating IPM scouting and record keeping to one of these people, over and above their other tasks, would be beneficial for all concerned. There are many options available to train individuals on the basics, in fact, many of these candidates will have a good baseline of knowledge from their schooling.

Beyond this, cultural practices such as tree pruning to improve growing conditions, greens rolling to maintain green speeds without lowering mowing heights, irrigation and fertilizer timing, aerification, verticutting and topdressing frequency, will be considerations as well. Clearly, equipment purchases or the addition of manpower to accomplish some of these tasks will require financial commitment, but if one fungicide application is avoided per year there will be some cost recovery, and a great boon to the environment.

At the very least, your applications will be better timed and more effective, resulting in a better product. Accurate records will provide the documentation that support your actions and justify future purchases and management decisions.



And for superintendents in new positions, a formal IPM program will shorten the learning curve about the nuances of the course. Microclimates and unique soil or growing conditions will become evident more quickly and effective management strategies can be applied.

### MORE REASONS

Pursuing IPM Accreditation may seem costly but I believe it is the impartiality of a third party that lends maximum credibility to the program. I would suggest that owners, general managers and directors of private clubs would be wise to consider this a necessary step toward meeting their responsibilities and reducing liability.

It is an effective way to demonstrate due diligence as it pertains to the responsible management of resources for the sustainability of the golf course and the environment, and with more and more public scrutiny of golf course management practices and more pesticide bans looming, I submit that the sooner we all get on board the better our position will be.

Depending on your level of autonomy over your own budgets and the level of influence of your board, you may have



some work to do to present your case, however the time to be proactive and responsible is now, and not later, when these systems become mandated.

One other note...I honestly believe that while we are still learning through this process, Bayview Golf & Country Club is a better course and I am a better golf course manager as a result.



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 CHARTER**

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Private Perspectives, a regular department in each issue of Golf Business Canada, focuses on business articles related to interests of private and semi-private course management. We welcome any feedback or suggestions you may have on this feature and any of the departments in Golf Business Canada. Please email comment to Pamela Stewart, Editor, at [pstewart@ngcoa.ca](mailto:pstewart@ngcoa.ca) or call (613) 226-3616.

*For more information about IPM Accreditation contact Julie Van Mole at Ridgetown College 1 866 385 4762 or visit [www.ontarioipm.com](http://www.ontarioipm.com).*