

RUGBY GROUNDSMEN CONNECTED

Managing Rugby Pitches During Hot Weather and Drought

IF YOU HAVE ACCESS TO IRRIGATION

- Make sure your watering system is working efficiently. Check sprinkler arcs, hoses, nozzles
- Water only the essential areas.
- Do not water during the day.
- Reduce the frequency of watering and water more thoroughly each time, to get moisture well into the soil.
- Do not allow puddles to form or surface run-off to occur.
- Improve infiltration of water by spiking (not slitting) and use of wetting agents
- Raise the height of cut when mowing. If possible return clippings to help to act as mulch.

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO IRRIGATION

- Be prepared to close specific problem areas that have become dangerous.
- Do not apply pesticide or fertiliser.
- Continue to mow, but not as frequently and when possible increase the height of cut (approx. 75mm). The grass will survive better in the long term with careful mowing rather than none at all.
- Aeration is a must, this does not have to be deep (be careful if the ground is too hard which could damage the tines)
- Stop any verti-cutting or scarification as the surface area for the sun to dry will be increased
- If a Water Authority decides to impose a ban look through the precise terms of the ban and assess its application and relevance to the club.

AFTER THE DROUGHT

- Reinstate any severely damaged areas as soon as conditions and water availability allows.
- Wetting agents should still be used to help with rewetting of drought-damaged or water-repellent turf.
- After the immediate problems have been dealt with it may be necessary to revise the management strategy to minimise future problems. The following points should be considered:
 - Alleviate compaction and eliminate excessive thatch to encourage deeper rooting.
 - If possible, manage turf to favour drought-tolerant species
 - Update the irrigation system to improve efficiency.
 - Investigate alternative water sources and increase the water storage capacity.

GENERAL ADVICE

Good maintenance practices will encourage the development of a vigorous healthy sward with a deep root system, which will be able to withstand the effects of drought better than a weak sward with shallow rooting long term.