

Bearsted Golf Club Frost Policy.

Introduction

The aim of the Club, as a general principle, is to make every effort to enable our members and guests to play the course in frosty conditions. However, in the best interests of all members and guests, there may be a need to balance this aim with the need to:

- Protect the greens from undue damage.

Frozen grass is vulnerable to damage.

Turf is normally resilient to traffic, but when ice crystals (frost) form inside the plants, they become brittle and vulnerable to damage. Walking or driving over frost-covered grass may rupture plant cells, leading to dead turf. Or the plants may be weakened without immediately showing the effects. It can take grass more than a month to recover from this damage.

Frost can linger in colder microclimates long after other areas have thawed. North-facing slopes, low-lying areas and areas sheltered from the wind and areas of shade are especially likely to remain covered with frost. This is the reason that some flags will remain on frost greens for longer than others.

Frost damage can occur on any part of the golf course, but it poses the greatest risk to closely mown turf. Greens are particularly vulnerable because they experience the most concentrated traffic. A foursome typically takes 300 steps or more on each green; if there is frost present, all those steps could cause serious damage.

Each one of the 300 footsteps can result in an area on the grass plant which disease can start to effect and result in loss of grass coverage and poor putting conditions. Anybody that has played over the last few weeks will have noticed that the frost greens are yellow and starting to lose grass coverage. This is a result of the concentrated traffic around the frost greens in frosty conditions.

Greens are most susceptible to damage when they are starting to thaw. The top surface can move but the ground below is still frozen which will not move which will result in roots being sheared off.

Protecting the main greens with frost greens will result in better, more consistent greens in the spring and summer months.

Frost greens

To protect the main greens, frost greens will be marked out and maintained from the end of September until April.

Types of frost

Leaf frost is when just the leaf is frozen. Leaf frosts can form when temperatures are below 3 degrees. Leaf frosts are quicker to clear after sunrise.

Ground frosts normally form when temperatures are below 0 degrees which result in the greens rootzone and leaf becoming frozen solid. The leaf will thaw first but the ground frost will take a lot longer to thaw.

Decision Making

Flags will be placed onto the Frost greens by the greenkeeping team when either leaf frost or Ground frost is present. Each green will be assessed individually, and the flag moved to a frost green if needed as part of the morning set up of the course.

The Club will endeavor to advise members and guests of any restrictions as soon as possible. The Club's website will reflect the current status as will course status phone message.

Moving back onto main Greens

Once the frost has started to clear it is important that the greens are checked to make sure the rootzone is not still frozen.

A tent peg needs to be pushed into the greens without any unusual resistance to a depth of **10cm**. This needs to be done across the greens in several different places to ensure the whole green is free from frost. If clear the flag will be placed back onto the main green. During the week the greenkeeping team will complete the task of putting them back on the main greens. At weekends a member of the pro-shop staff will complete the check. To help the pro shop staff the greenkeepers will, before leaving, give an update on the number of frost greens and an **estimated** time at which main greens could be put back into play. This estimated time will consider the weather forecast and how severe the frost is. Once the check has been completed on the 9th green, if found to be clear of frost, the pro shop will sound three blasts on the Klaxon to allow golfers to put the flag back on the main greens on the hole which they are playing. This will mean greens are back on main greens as quickly as possible.

The 1st, 4th, 6th and 18th are greens which are covered by shade, these greens will take longer to clear of frost. A sign will be placed on the tee and near the frost green stating that 'This hole will remain on a frost green all day'. This will also be stated on the Club's website.