

# Golf greens ruined after ban on pesticide lets bugs run riot

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GOLF greens are being ruined by going eco-friendly, with a pesticides ban resulting in infestations of larvae.

Greenkeepers say they are struggling with damaged golf courses after crane fly larvae chewed through the grass, destroying swathes of greenery.

A ban in 2016 on chlorpyrifos, the chemical used to kill the larvae, has left them powerless to tackle the infestations as golfers return to the sport after the lifting of some Covid-19 restrictions.

The damage to golf courses and other sports fields starts when crane flies lay their larvae – known as leatherjackets – under the turf. The grubs begin to eat the roots of the grass, while damage can also occur from above as predators, including badgers and birds, dig up the grass to get at them.

The pesticide chlorpyrifos was banned in the UK due to developmental issues it can cause in children, including brain damage, learning difficulties and ADHD. An EU ban came into force last year and in the US regulators are coming under pressure to ban it.

Greenkeepers said a wet autumn and dry spring had exacerbated the problem as the lack of grass roots to absorb moisture had led to sludgy conditions in the winter, while the present dry conditions meant reseeding was difficult.

An alternative chemical remedy is

available but can only be used on limited areas and at certain times of year, while nematodes, a natural remedy, is expensive and not always effective.

As a result, greenkeepers are asking golfers to adjust their expectations away from the perfect, pristine greens to which they were accustomed.

Dan Kendle, head greenkeeper at Newquay Golf Club, said he knew course managers who were considering quitting due to the stress caused by the infestations and the resulting criticism from golf club members.

"It's heartbreaking for my team not to be able to do anything and then you hear the comments from members because they don't understand," he said.

One upside was that the shift had been beneficial for nature, he said, with Cornish choughs, which came back two decades ago after a period of decline, spotted feeding on the green.

Karl Hansell, of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers' Association, said a survey found that 99 per cent of 400 respondents had issues with the larvae.

However, clubs were becoming more eco-conscious, he said, so most did not want to start using the pesticide again.

"Golfers want to see wildlife, they want to see wildflowers in the rough.

"They'd rather that than a snooker table. So I think everybody's moving in that direction," he said.

## Detectorist guilty of Iron Age trea

"wood birdwatcher" Wood saw a feather between

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