

# Fall Equipment Maintenance

By Eli Luster

Turf growth patterns change dramatically as weather patterns make the transition from summer to fall. In many areas and at many levels of play, sports activity accelerates. All too often, new field construction and renovation of existing fields kick in at the same time. Demands on equipment frequently rival the intensity of the spring rush.

A comprehensive equipment preventive maintenance program can ensure machines are ready to work and curtail costly downtime.

## Tap Operator Expertise

No one knows a machine as well as the person who operates it day after day. Schedule short, one-on-one meetings with equipment operators and your service technicians to discuss machine performance. Big problems can be avoided by tracking down the cause of those seemingly little things, like a change in the sound or feel of the machine in certain conditions: a part that sticks, slips or hesitates before or while functioning; or slight changes in efficiency levels.

These meetings should result in a detailed list of things to check and services to perform.

## Utility Vehicles Maintenance Checklist

- Perform regular preventive maintenance on utility vehicles.
- Check the little things, including those that affect operator comfort.
- Examine the unit's carrying surfaces and repair any damage.

These one-on-one sessions are an excellent time to introduce equipment performance and maintenance tracking programs. Something as simple as a label attached over the hour meter noting the next scheduled service interval will help the operators become more aware of their role in the maintenance program. Technicians also can encourage operators to provide input on the units at any time. For example, an operator's report of a machine's need for additional fuel or oil can be the warning signal of a

developing problem.

Their observations on equipment performance during actual working conditions can save considerable diagnostic hours and dollars.

## Prioritize and Schedule

Once equipment performance data has been gathered, technicians can prioritize service requirements. Obviously, some conditions will need immediate attention; some may be placed on a "first available time" slot; some will be added to that

## Power Systems Maintenance Checklist

Preventive maintenance procedures need to be performed before the start and at the end of the fall season:

- Clear air passage routes.
- Replace air filters as necessary on all powered units, following the air restriction indicator, if the machine is so equipped. On machines without indicators, check maintenance records, factor in the extra hours of operation and degree of dust, and change the air filter if close to the replacement period. *Note:* Removing the air filter and shaking or tapping it to remove dust only loosens particles, which may then work their way into the engine and cause damage.
- Check all fuel, oil and hydraulic filters, making replacements as required.
- Perform normal oil maintenance, changing the weight of oil as necessary to accommodate dropping temperatures.
- Check fuels. In regions where summer and winter fuel blends vary, plan to use all summer-fuel supplies before the switch is made.
- Change the antifreeze on liquid-cooled engines, especially those with an aluminum head or block.
- Clean the battery and battery terminals and check electrolyte levels. Charge the battery. Make sure the charging system is operating properly.
- Check for leaks.
- Check all belts and chains.
- Lubricate all parts that need lubrication.
- Replace spark plugs.
- Clean electrical connections.
- Make sure all safety devices are in place and operating properly.



### Mowing Units Maintenance Checklist

- Clean mower decks thoroughly on both ride-on and walk-behind rotary mowers.
- Repair nicks and chips and replace any damaged guards or shields on the mower deck.
- Sharpen mower blades and, if possible, sharpen a back-up set of blades for each mower. It's especially important that the final cut of the season be made with freshly sharpened blades.
- Adjust mowing heights for both cool- and warm-season turf and make sure mower deck height-adjustment devices are operating properly and easily.
- Readjust mower decks, leveling them properly from side-to-side and front-to-back.

unit's next regular service interval; and others might even be postponed until the end of the active work season for that machine. Following this schedule, technicians can order parts to have on hand, ready to use, when services will be performed, further eliminating delays.

Once the maintenance schedules are set, they can, and *should*, be communicated to the operators. Crew member cooperation will greatly increase when they realize their input is valued and their job performance is important enough to the facility to keep their equipment in top working condition.

Preventive maintenance pays. Those little things you don't do when they first need attention can turn into the big things that eat big holes in your budget. It pays other dividends, too.

Studies have shown that superior performance comes from operators on "superior" (well-maintained) machines.

### Aerators and Dethatchers Maintenance Checklist

- Examine walk-behind aerators and dethatchers to ensure the power units are operating properly. Perform preventive maintenance procedures as outlined above for power units.
- On walk-behind, pull-behind or ride-on units, make sure all belts and chains are in good shape and that all moving parts are properly lubricated.
- Be sure height- and spacing-adjustment devices are operating properly and easily.
- Check the "rotors" on dethatching units. Replace any worn or broken rotors and make sure they are set at the proper depth.
- Examine the tines, spoons or spikes on aeration units, replacing any that are worn or damaged.

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pride of performance both rise. Well-maintained machines merit more careful handling and receive better care from operators, thus performing longer with greater efficiency.

### Watch the Basics

On all equipment, use the operators manual for each machine as the maintenance guide. Shorten maintenance intervals to compensate for such operating conditions as dusty, new construction; sandy soils; or excessive rains. Ensure that all safety guards and shields are in place and that all safety devices are operating properly.

### Comply with Regulations

Examine the equipment maintenance area to ensure that all procedures comply with government regulations. Check storage practices. Review proper disposal of gas, oil, antifreeze, chemical containers and rinsate with all personnel. Make sure posting of all regulations, informational materials and warnings is up to date. □

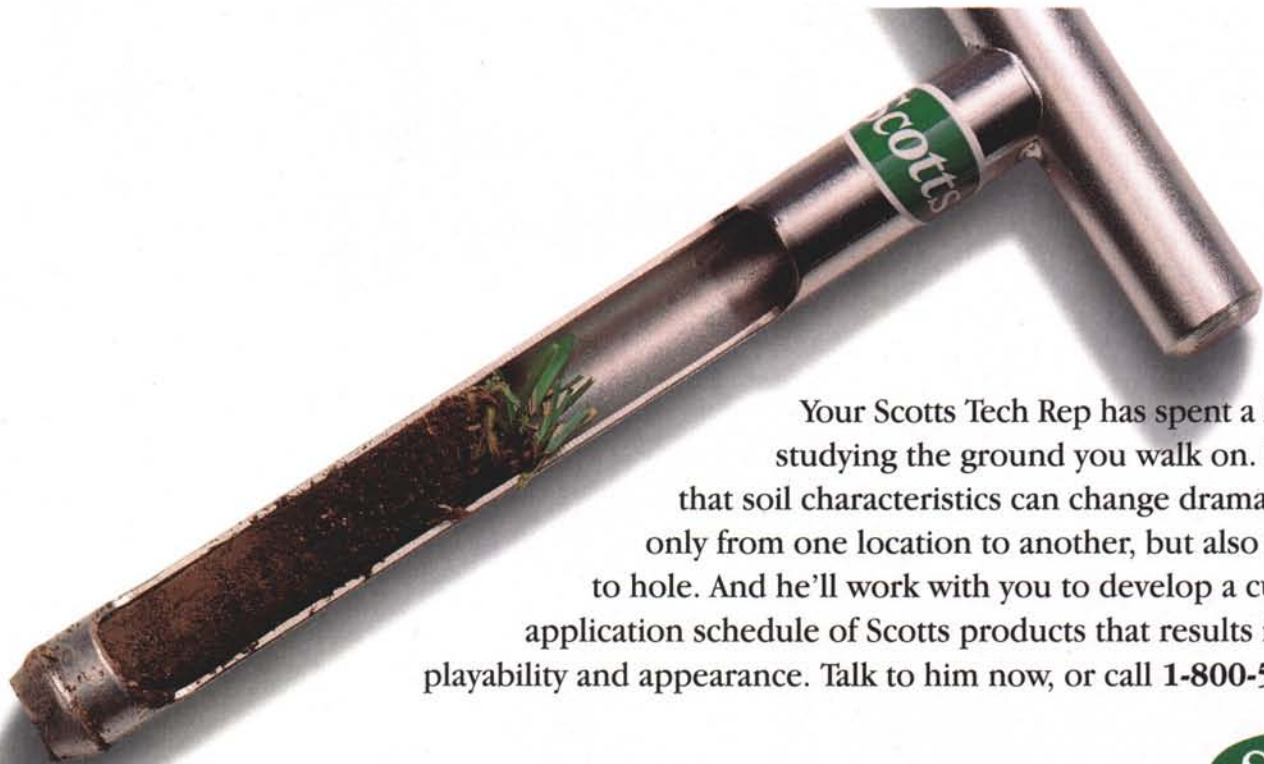
*Eli Luster is supervisor of Golf & Turf Market Development Field Support for John Deere worldwide, including field service and the computer and phone technical service network. He's based at John Deere's Horicon, Wis., facility.*

## Sprayers Maintenance Checklist

- Perform preventive maintenance on spray units according to manufacturers' recommendations.
- Check for external damage and for internal damage to lines, booms or nozzles from abrasive materials.
- Clean units thoroughly.
- Make sure firing speeds are consistent and that the proper type nozzles are in place.
- Conduct the standard pre-season check on equality of nozzle output and uniformity of spray patterns.
- Perform all manufacturer recommended service on high pressure, subsurface injection units.

## Attachments Maintenance Checklist

- Check over attachments thoroughly, including the power units, and perform all recommended service maintenance.
- Examine wear points and ground contact points closely. Replace all worn or damaged parts.
- Make sure shear bolts have been used to replace damaged or missing shear bolts.
- Clean spreaders and check calibration accuracy across the complete range of application levels for fertilizers and grass seed.



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