

# How much is too much...



## Round II

**Have questions? Send them to Dave at: ISU, Hort. Dept., Ames, IA 50011.**

by Dr. Dave Minner

*Is there an acceptable rest interval between activities/events? Should there be "X" hours of rest between game intervals? This type of parameter would help us the most. It would help us define an acceptable level of rotation that we do not currently have.*

— Mark Richwine  
Parks and Recreation Administrator  
City of Tempe Community Services  
Tempe, AZ

Mark's situation is difficult, but typical of intense use and scheduling problems. He oversees the Phoenix metropolitan area, with 51 lighted fields and just as many unlighted fields. Sports consist of soccer, pop Warner football, flag football, softball, Little League, ultimate Frisbee, rugby, NFL air-it-out, and the list goes on.

Many of the fields are just beaten to death. The greatest damage occurs during fall/winter/spring when bermudagrass is dormant. They close many of the fields in summer to renovate and regrow grass, but they deteriorate again by January.

### Hot topic

October's question, "How many games can our field take before there is too much damage?" generated an enormous response. Obviously, this topic needs several more rounds of discussion.

I'm still answering your e-mail messages from last month, so be patient. In the mean time, send me your response by filling in your information for the two most-asked questions from October:

• With my current management practices and event schedule, my field will wear out after \_\_\_ events.

• With my current management practices and event

schedule, I could maintain a good \_\_\_\_\_ (soccer, baseball, softball, football, etc.) field condition if I were able to rest the field for \_\_\_\_\_ days following every \_\_\_\_\_ events.

Give me your response and look for a tally in a future issue.

### It's in the turf

The answer is not with me or any other turf expert. It can be found by periodically rating the field and accurately determining all field activities.

If you don't keep records of field events, send me your best guess and start keeping a written record immediately. It's important to use this information to rate your field performance on a routine schedule. You can determine the point at which your field begins to decline from too much traffic.

Rate your field on a simple scale from one to five. Five represents the best field condition, and one the worst. Have the same person perform the evaluations each time.

Evaluate turf on the most intensely trafficked areas. Your evaluations should be simple and consistent.

Remember, you're customizing the rating system based on your own resources, facility, and level of activity. Be prepared to have your process scrutinized, and be willing to make reasonable

changes in your assessment.

Count your activities in any format that you want, but be consistent. I consider an event any game, practice, or other activity that contributes to compaction, wear, or degradation of the field.

You may not get it all figured out the first year, but this exercise will certainly give you a keen understanding of which activities truly damage your field and when the fields should be rested.

Administrators and user groups will respond to documented field conditions, field activity, and input resources. Once you define field performance based on use activities, you're likely to have more influence over field use scheduling. □

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Numeric field rating	% living green turf cover	Overall assessment	Breakthru	Hardness	Softness
5, Best	90-100	Excellent	No breakthru or thatch, mat intact	Good cleat penetration and cushion	Good cleat penetration, stiffness, traction, and fast surface
4	70-89	Good	No breakthru, grass blades and thatch beginning to wear	Good cleat penetration, moderate cushion	Good footing, moderately stiff surface
3	50-69	Fair	Some breakthru, thatch beginning to wear, soil exposed	Adequate cleat penetration, no effect on player performance	Adequate stiffness, no effect on player performance
2	30-49	Poor	Substantial breakthru, thatch/mat worn away, exposed soil	Too hard for falling	Poor grip and little resistance on foot plant, unstable, slow surface
1, Worst	0-29	Not acceptable	Very little vegetation, mostly exposed soil surface	Poor cleat penetration, cleat skating on surface, hard like concrete	Noticeable depressions and foot divots, player leg fatigue, unstable surface