

Recommendations for Pitch Maintenance

Pitch Maintenance requires :-

- The application of suitable fertilisers.
- Frequent mowing.
- Control of weeds.
- Repairs to divots and goal mouth areas.
- Aeration and relief of compaction.

Lime and Fertilisers:

- Have soil tested every five years to check fertility.
- Apply lime if required.
- Each Spring spread fertiliser to stimulate growth. Apply 2 – 2.5 bags per acre.

Sand based pitches require more frequent fertiliser applications and higher inputs of phosphate and potash. Slow release fertilisers could also be used throughout the year.

Mowing

Commence in early March. Mowing at this time helps the sward to thicken. Continue regular mowing throughout the Summer and into Autumn / early Winter if necessary. Raise the height of mowing by 10-12mm. in very dry periods and during Autumn / early Winter. Infrequent mowing causes the sward to thin out. Any grass sward which is allowed to overgrow tends to form a thin and open sward.

Weed Control

Control weeds by using 24D chemical weed killer formulations. Spray when active growth commences which is usually from mid-April onwards. For best results, dry weather should prevail for 5 or 6 hours after spraying. Avoid mowing for 3-4 days following spray application. Clover usually occurs in patches and gives rise to a slippery surface because of its ability to retain moisture on its leaves. It can be controlled with formulations containing Mecoprop (CMPP).

Repairs to the Pitch :

The use of heavy rollers to level the playing surface is not recommended. Heavy rolling causes soil compaction and this stunts subsequent grass growth. The repair of small damaged areas is done by resodding and not by reseeding. Divots should be repaired as soon as possible after the damage occurs and this is best done by hand forking and footing and using sand or a soil / sand mix to fill in depressions.

Aeration and Relief of Compaction :

Aeration of the soil becomes increasingly necessary with the increasing demand for extra games. Spring and Autumn are suitable times to spike or vertidrain pitch surfaces. These operations should only be carried out on reasonably dry soil conditions. An extensive range of soil aeration equipment is available. These help to relieve compaction, improve drainage and promote good root growth.

Sanding of Pitches :

Sanding has become a popular practice. It helps to improve the drainage and results in good playing surfaces. However, before sanding is contemplated, it is imperative that drainage is not a problem. Sanding should never be regarded as a replacement or alternative to good drainage.

Procedure for Sanding :

The best sand to use is graded 0.15 – 0.5mm.

Sanding is usually carried out by spreading 5 mm. of suitable sand on the pitch. This amounts to a 100 tonne on a standard size playing field. Sand is best applied when ground conditions are dry i.e. April / Sept..

It is good practice to spike or vertidrain pitch playing surfaces in conjunction with sanding. This process relieves compaction and improves surface drainage.