

*Following are the most frequently asked questions arising from golfers as many courses in Nebraska and the Great Plains are experiencing widespread turfgrass winterkill.*

## **Why did the grass die?**

Much like summer drought, the windy and dry weather this past winter caused grass plants to die of dehydration and desiccation. Elevated or wind-exposed areas such as mounds and green and bunker banks were the most susceptible to desiccation injury. Dramatic swings in air temperature during January and February may have also killed some of the golf course turf.

## **What was different this winter?**

Snow is great insulation and protection, and snow melt throughout winter helps keep the grass hydrated. The lack of snow cover this winter left the turfgrass unprotected from the relentless dry winds and extreme temperature swings.

## **Why is the course across town fine?**

Winter desiccation injury is extremely variable. Generally, turfgrass in protected areas have fewer winterkill problems than exposed areas. Features that make turf management challenging during the heat of the summer, such as large trees, fences, and low areas, can shelter the turf and help reduce desiccation injury during winter.

## **Could anything have been done to prevent this winterkill?**

Extremely laborious and expensive turf covers and winter watering likely helped on most greens, but these practices are practically and financially im-

practical on the rest of the golf course. Turf damage may still have occurred in spite of these preventative measures.

## **What's being done to aid recovery?**

Thinned turf will recover slowly, but most courses will require overseeding to some extent. Golf course superintendents are using their experience and education to quickly repair and recover from the winterkill damage. Seeding will likely occur in a few weeks once soil temperatures increase and the risk fades of another hard frost. The new seedlings will need expert care to speed recovery and prepare the new plants for summer heat and drought stress.

## **How long will recovery take?**

Recovery will largely depend on Mother Nature. Warm temperatures and ample rain will help accelerate recovery, but a cold and dry spring will hinder seed germination and slow recovery. Please be patient.

## **What can golfers do to help?**

Please respect all cart rules and golf course signs. New seedlings can be easily killed by foot or golf cart traffic. Patience now will accelerate recovery and get your favorite course back to tip-top shape as quickly as possible.

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Figure 1. Exposed and elevated areas were most susceptible to winter desiccation injury. Changes in elevation as little as a few inches made the difference between winter death and survival.