

The real story about **worm casts**

Earthworms are considered a 'beneficial species' due to the good work they do recycling nutrients within the soil.

However, as of September 2017 there are no chemical controls for casting earthworms approved for use on golf courses, leaving greenkeepers with a dilemma as to how to combat them.



Problems caused by casting earthworms include:

- Unightly and numerous casts
- Collection on soles of shoes
- Uneven playing surfaces and adversely affected ball roll
- Build up can in the short term ruin playing surfaces
- Casts encourage weed seeds and germination
- Casts can be sticky and slimy
- Problems with machinery
- Damage to bottom blades of mowers
- Casts alter the height of cut, due to build-up on mower front rollers
- Smearing after mowing
- Casts smother finer leafed grasses
- Difficult to control

Alternative methods for controlling or suppressing earthworms are labour intensive, potentially costly and with no guarantee of success.

Options include:

- Cultural practices to remove food source
- Lowering the ph of the soil
- Introducing abrasive material through top dressing
- Lowering volumetric water content in the soil via improved drainage and/or use of penetrants

Unfortunately for many golf courses, there is no effective way of managing worm casts. It is important that golfers understand this and exercise patience as the greenkeeping team seeks to reduce the impact as much as possible.

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