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CONFERENCE 2024

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chairmans message

Welcome to another edition of Course for Horses.

As each edition of our magazine coincides with a change in seasons, it also coincides with a change in everyone's day to day management practices. This is always a challenge, but one that is met extremely well by all our group of Racecourse Managers.

In light of this it is timely to remind everyone that you are not alone out there. We are fortunate to have a great network and a bank of knowledge to ensure our tracks are the best and safest they can be for all participants. A great deal of interaction happens at our annual conference and I encourage everyone to keep this as an ongoing practice which can only be beneficial to all.

Everyone should also be mindful of the great support we receive from our suppliers and supporters. Continued developments in technology and products are all designed to assist us in continual improvement of our racing and training surfaces. These businesses continue to be great supporters of our organisation, so please don't hesitate to contact any of them, or your colleagues, for help and support.

Lindsay Murphy

ARMA COMMITTEE

and office bearers

NSW - Lindsay Murphy (Chairman & Treasurer)
0417 744 252 lindsay-murphy@outlook.com

VIC - Martin Synan (Deputy Chairman & Secretary)
0407 819 027 martin.synan@mvr.net.au

QLD - Murray Weeding
0414 923 301 mweeding@sctc.com.au

SA - David Shepherdson
trackmanager@mountgambieracing.com.au

WA - Brock Neeling
0437 445 132 bneeling@perthracetracing.com.au

TAS - Matthew Reggett
0418 864 061 m.reggett@tasracing.com.au

Administration - Wendy Synan
0423 622 542 admin@racecoursemanagers.com.au

Events - Liam Smith
0412 711 387 events@racecoursemanagers.com.au

2024 CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF THE 2023 TAB ARMA CONFERENCE AT THE CANNON PARK RACECOURSE IN CAIRNS, WHERE INDUSTRY LEADERS GATHERED TO CELEBRATE COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION, THE STAGE IS SET FOR ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY EVENT.

THE 2023 CONFERENCE, HOSTED BY THE CAIRNS JOCKEY CLUB, NOT ONLY ATTRACTED RECORD NUMBERS OF DELEGATES AND SPONSORS BUT ALSO SHOWCASED THE VITAL ROLE OF RACECOURSE MANAGERS IN THE INDUSTRY'S ADVANCEMENT. WITH TABCORP AS THE NAMING RIGHTS PARTNER, THE CONFERENCE UNDERScoreD A COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING BETTER WAGERING OUTCOMES AND RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS OF RACECOURSE MANAGERS.

THE BUSTLING TRADE SHOW, INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION SESSIONS, AND PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS CEREMONIES HIGHLIGHTED THE EVENT'S SIGNIFICANCE IN DRIVING PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT. THE GOLD COAST TURF CLUB HAS BEEN SECURED FOR THIS YEARS CONFERENCE IN AUGUST.

WWW.RACECOURSEMANAGERS.COM.AU FOR MORE DETAILS AS THEY DROP.

AN INNOVATION IN TRACK CROSSINGS

Rebound Safety Mats (RSM)

Author: Ernie Gmehling (Ground Science)

Innovations in the horse racing industry are usually driven by the health and safety of the horse and the rider. Over the past twelve months, Ground Science has been engaged by Equine Crossings Australia (ECA) to test and validate the performance of their new Rebound Safety mats which are being rolled out around the country to improve track crossings. Our initial work focused on ECA raw product: a recycled matting system made from old shoe soles. Initial testing focused on the drainage capacity of the product, both in a vertical and horizontal direction in the laboratory, which was used to assist with the field profile design. The mat product was encapsulated in a perspex cell to measure direct water infiltration rates, with values exceeding our expectations. The horizontal infiltration testing also included flow rates when the Perspex cell was placed on various grades.



The second part of the lab trials involved trafficking the mat with an equivalent wheel load of machinery that would typically be used at a racetrack facility. Ground Science previously developed a testing rig that could simulate wheel loads exceeding a semi-trailers wheel load of 4kg/cm². The GTT test rig was used to test the mat for deformation after several passes under direct traffic loading. The mat product was found to return to its original shape, soon after each pass with no permanent deformation observed. The mat would never be used as a direct wearing surface on a track crossing and therefore would never be subjected to this type of wheel loadings even though it exceeded expectations.

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The true test of the Rebound Safety Mats and profile design was insitu testing of a constructed track crossing. Ground Science has an instrument called a Light Weight Deflectometer (which was briefly presented at the 2023 ARMA Cairns Conference) that measures the stiffness of a pavement profile over a surface area of 300mm dia and to a depth of 600mm. This device is Ideal for comparing the performance of a track crossing before and after installation, that is also used to measure the profile stiffness of the course proper (crossing approach). Our field trials across several Victorian and Queensland track crossings before the installation of the ECA Rebound Safety Mats, have indicated stiffness values that far exceed the values obtained on the course proper. Our testing has revealed stiffness values ranging from 10 times to 50 times stiffer than the course-proper approaches (turf profile). The testing continued with the LWD device being used on the Flemington and Sandown racecourse where the ECA Rebound Safety Mats crossing has been installed. The test results exceeded our expectations, with the data showing that the stiffness on the track crossing was equal to values achieved on the course proper. Feedback from Jockeys indicates that they cannot feel any variation in the concussive forces between the two surfaces and suggest this innovation is long overdue.



The LWD testing device is now also being used on new track constructions to validate the uniformity of construction and the stiffness of other equine surfaces and arenas and elite sporting grounds. For more information Contact Ernie Gmehling or Ian Pearce

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West Coast Circuit

The all-important NZ Summer Racing schedule provides many inexperienced race-goers an opportunity to get along to one of the country tracks and enjoy a days racing and entertainment.

One of the Nations favourite carnivals takes place on the West Coast of NZ, just once a year. The carnival see's racing take place at Greymouth, Kumara and Reefton, in early January.

A highlight of the circuit is the historical Vernon & Vazey Kumara Gold Nuggets. This year, 'The Nuggets' were taken out by Robbie Patterson's trained runner, REGAL DICE. Robbie's team dominated the South Island Carnival, kicking home several winners over the three race meetings.

The prodigious rainfall on the Coast always plays a role in track preparation and Regional Track Advisor, Alan Chapman works closely with the local committee's and track crew. The tracks performed well for all three meetings and the large crowds enjoyed the week.

NZ National Conference

Dates and a venue have been confirmed for the NZ National Racecourse Managers Conference. The Conference will be hosted at Riccarton Park and takes place from the 9-11th June 2024.



Ballarat Inside Grass Track

Reconstruction of the inside grass track is nearing completion. The track has been fully reconstructed to form a consistent 16m wide track, from base up including the installation of a new drainage network, growing medium, irrigation system and has been turfed with kikuyu. This will be oversewed into the future to suit local climate and training needs.

The track is currently in the consolidation phase following this significant upgrade.



Wangaratta Sand Track



A new Sand track has been constructed at the Wangaratta Turf Club to assist the clubs training population and facilities that are available. The track sits inside the existing training tracks and works have included stabilization of the base, drainage installation, and automatic irrigation system and new sand and rail. Works have recently been complete and are shortly being opened for use.

Mornington Racecourse

The construction of new uphill sand track at the Mornington Racecourse has recently been completed.

This is a brand-new track and training option for the local trainers and sits on the outside the main tracks.

The deep uphill sand is approx. 600m and has a steep 200m-300m incline to provide trainers with a new variation to their training resume. (pic right)



Pakenham Trot Track and Trainers Tower

Works have recently been completed on a new 800m inside trot track at the Pakenham Racing Club. The track sits inside the existing training tracks and works have included construction of a crushed rock base, drainage installation, and new sand and rail. Works have recently been complete and are shortly being opened for use. The track provides access to the newly constructed trainers tower located centrally within the track. (pic left)

Penshurst Track Upgrade

Works have been completed at the Penshurst Racecourse to improve the camber and track width from the winning post around the bottom turn of the track. Works have involved the stripping of the existing topsoil, re-cambering of the track, return of the growing medium and seeding of the track. The track height has been lifted up to 0.5m in some sections with the previous tabletop camber that was present. This should assist the club with drainage, and more event racing surface, which will allow the full width of the track to be utilized. (pic right)



Murtoa Racecourse

Murtoa Racecourse has had some minor upgrades to the surface to increase the width of the track at the home turn. The track historically narrowed on the turn and these works have been completed to create a consistent width throughout this area.

Track Drainage Upgrades

Track drainage upgrades of sand slitting and banding have continued over recent months with significant drainage works completed on the Course Propers of Kilmore Racecourse and Wangaratta Racing Club. The installation of sand slitting provide a re-activation of the existing drainage network and it has been proved with recent rain events over Christmas how these installations have significantly improved these tracks' ability to drainage during and following rain events.

Irrigation Updates

As part of the ongoing upgrades of irrigation systems in Victoria, the new irrigation system at Stony Creek is nearing completion. This is a fully automatic pop-up irrigation system which will significantly assist the club with watering their track from the previous towline system.

Running Rail Upgrades

Racing Victoria are currently completing running rail upgrades across the State with several training centres receiving new plastic rail to install on their training tracks.

Around the tracks:

- Bryce Mildon finishes up with Pakenham Racing Club in April. We wish Bryce all the best with his future and thank him for his contribution with racing in Victoria.
- Renovations are slowing down but has been a successful season for turf renovations around the state.



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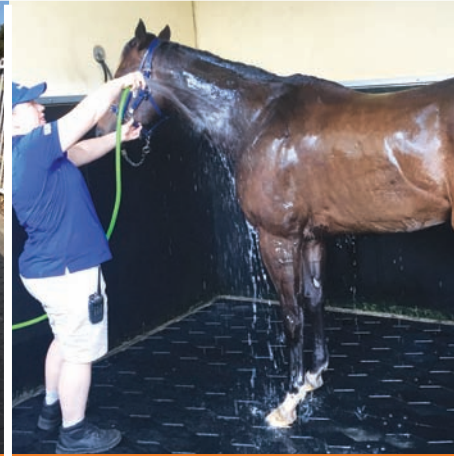
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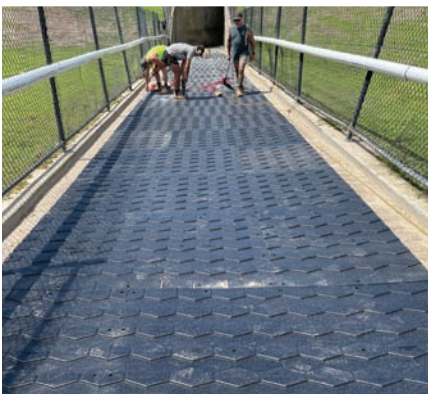
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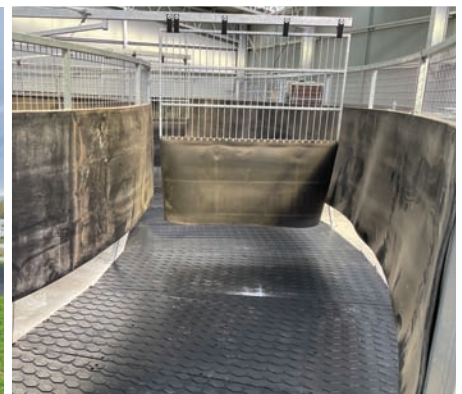
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\$20 Million Funding Injection For Regional Horse Racing

Racing NSW is investing nearly \$20 million in country and provincial racetracks. The Racing NSW Board has committed to a significant capital works program, focusing on shovel-ready projects such as new stabling, track upgrades, and other infrastructure improvements.

Wyang racecourse has secured over \$1.5 million for irrigation and drainage upgrades, as well as a new machinery shed.

Goulburn racecourse will receive the most substantial funding, totalling \$9.5 million, for the construction of 80 new stables and supporting infrastructure, with necessary development approvals already obtained.

Gosford racecourse will undergo construction of a new home turn camber on the course proper, with a budget of \$2 million. This initiative aims to enhance the competitiveness of racing at Gosford, with works set to commence immediately following The Coast race meeting in May 2024.

Dubbo, Albury, Wagga, and Grafton have secured funding for new or improved training tracks, with works ready to commence immediately.

Ballina will receive funding for a comprehensive irrigation system upgrade, ensuring efficient management of their training and racing surfaces.

For a full list of projects, refer to the following:

Albury: New sand track.

Dubbo: New sand track.

Wagga: Renovation of 'Riverside'; grass training track.

Wyang: Irrigation and drainage upgrades, and new machinery shed.

Ballina: Complete upgrade of irrigation system.

Orange: Refurbishment of on-course stables.

Grafton: New sand track and irrigation system upgrades.

Goulburn: Construction of 80 new stables and supporting infrastructure.

Gosford: Re-cambering of the home turn.

Farewell from New South Wales

Congratulations to Jody Rodgers on his recent appointment as Racecourse Manager at the Gold Coast Turf Club. Jody has done a great job at Scone Race Club, always presenting the surface in terrific order. His willingness to assist and provide advice to neighbouring clubs has been appreciated and he will be missed in New South Wales.

Scone Race Club are in the process of finalising Jody's replacement with the jewel in their crown being the two-day Scone Carnival in May, which features a metropolitan Saturday meeting.

Luke Spicer has recently finished up as Track Manager at Forster-Tuncurry Jockey Club and will also make a move North. Luke was one of the initial success stories coming out of the Racing NSW Sportsturf Management apprenticeships offered previously.

Luke is dedicated to his craft and will be an asset in his next career opportunity.

Traineeships Racing NSW continues to roll out traineeships for aspiring racecourse managers.

The Certificate III in Track Management and Maintenance is a two-year course that covers all facets of the industry in an effort to develop the next generation.

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ECA Rebound Crossing Installations Sandown



Ballarat



FLEMINGTON BEFORE AND AFTER



WHAT THE JOCKEYS ARE SAYING

'I recently Rode over the new ECA crossover at Flemington, it was fantastic with a Rebound feel, not like most others that are rock hard and potentially dangerous. The horses stride approaching the green crossing just like the turf, did not alter and there was no feeling the horses were backing off towards it. Great job ECA! - Damian Oliver

'I recently rode on the newly installed ECA Rebound Crossover at Ballarat Turf Club. Crossovers are the most dangerous aspect on a racetrack. If tracks do have crossovers, there is always the concern for animal welfare and jockey safety. This technology/idea is ticking all the boxes, most importantly animal welfare & jockey safety. I am really looking forward to seeing how many clubs roll this out for safer work practices here in Australia.'
Craig Williams

'I rode on the new ECA Crossing that is installed at Flemington last Friday. It was the safest crossing that I have been on in Australia. The horses felt great and showed no signs of even knowing that the crossover was there. These should be installed all around Australia'.
Jye McNeil

Longford Training Centre

The Longford Training Centre is the primary training facility in the Launceston region of Tasmania.

The Longford turf track is utilised for Barrier Trials/Jump Outs, and training. In March 2023, the Longford turf track undertook a subsurface drainage project. Drainage works were undertaken by the Tasracing Longford team in conjunction with local company WD Drainage. Prior to the upgrades, poor drainage throughout certain sections of the track often resulted in underutilisation in higher rainfall periods. Drainage was installed in almost 50% of the track which included 3563m of 100mm

Agi pipe at 800mm depth below surface, backfilled with blue metal aggregate and sand.

Following the reestablishment of turf within the drainage lines, the track reopened in October 2023 and performed above expectations. Longford's sole race day for the year, the annual New Years Day meeting, received strong praise from participants. The track drainage project has significantly improved track performance since, and as a result will increase the number of days the track is able to be utilised through the higher rainfall periods of the year.

Further drainage and irrigation upgrades are now being planned for the Longford sand track to maximise surface consistency and improved moisture management.



Works in progress



Completed

Ladbroke's All Weather Track Spreyton (pic right)

The Ladbroke's All Weather Track Spreyton hosts Race Meetings, Barrier Trials/Jump Outs, and training in the Northwest of Tasmania. Mid-January following the Devonport Cup, contractors undertook flipping and grading of the Tapeta synthetic track.



Personnel- Matthew Dewhurst has commenced his new position as the track and facilities manager at Brighton Training Centre, the primary training facility of the Hobart region in Tasmania.

FOUR DECADES OF DEDICATION

On January 2, 2024, Marty Synan clocked in for his 40th year of service at the Moonee Valley Racing Club, achieving an astonishing milestone in his professional career. Synan's journey at the Club began as a young apprentice gardener in 1984, coinciding with Red Anchor's legendary victory at the Cox Plate. Since then, Synan has become an integral part of the club's fabric, dedicating himself to maintaining the track and facilities with unwavering passion and commitment.



Michael Browell, Chief Executive at MVRC was quick to heap praise on the milestone, "Marty Synan has been an integral part of the Moonee Valley Racing Club family for 40 years, which is a truly remarkable accomplishment. His dedication & wealth of knowledge have not only shaped how we prepare & present the track at The Valley but have also left an indelible mark on everyone he has worked with in the industry. I thank Marty for his tireless efforts in all that he has achieved throughout his four decades at the Club."

Reflecting on his early days, Synan fondly recalls his humble beginnings, working amidst a different culture where track staff enjoyed beers between races. "As an apprentice, my job was to put ice in the eskies on race days so the boys could have a drink, that's how it was back then," he recalls. Over the years, he has witnessed significant advancements in turf management, embracing modern techniques while navigating the heightened scrutiny that comes with managing a premium racecourse like Moonee Valley.

Despite the pressures and uncertainties that come with managing a premier racecourse, Synan finds solace in the moments of triumph and camaraderie shared with his colleagues. "I've got a lot of staff who have worked with me for such a long time and while I'm often the one doing the tv and radio interviews, it's my staff that are making me look good. I couldn't do this job without them," Synan explains.

Synan's journey is defined by a deep love for the sport and a commitment to ensuring its continued success. He has often had the best seat in the house to witness the absolute cream of the crop on the turf, "Black Caviar, Winx and So You Think were always amazing to see. If I had to pick a favourite Cox Plate, it would have to be Super Impose's Cox Plate in 1992. But I still think that Behold was the best horse I've seen. Tommy Hughes trained it to win two races in a row at The Valley. I may have had a share in that horse, so unlike my track, I might be biased with that one."

In discussing Synan's legacy, ARMA Chairman Lindsay Murphy commends his dedication, stating, "Marty's 40 year journey speaks volumes about his incredible talent and dedication to our Industry. His mastery and guidance have truly raised the bar for racecourse management nationwide. Marty has also been a driving force with ARMA, from his work on the annual ARMA Conferences to recently stepping up as Secretary and Treasurer, and then there's his MC work too. It's unbelievable that once a microphone comes out at the Conference, it's not too long until he is on the end of it."

Likewise, Liam O'Keeffe, Senior Manager – Flemington Racecourse at Victoria Racing Club, acknowledges Synan's invaluable contributions, emphasising the camaraderie among track managers in navigating the challenges of their roles. "Marty's got years of experience under his belt, and all the Racecourse Managers look up to him. He has been working at Moonee Valley since before I was born!"

"He's not just about the job, he's all about bringing people together, getting the best out of everyone and having fun doing it too. That kind of camaraderie is what makes working in racecourse management so special." O'Keeffe remarks.

Jason Kerr, General Manager – Racecourses at Melbourne Racing Club, echoes these sentiments, recognising Synan's impact on the racing community. "Marty's passion for racing and unwavering dedication to maintaining top quality tracks have left an enduring mark on us all. His milestone achievement is a testament to his resilience and commitment to excellence," Kerr affirms.

If there's one more thing that O'Keeffe and Kerr agree on, it's that Synan cannot tip a winner. "You'd think after 40 years, he'd know more about racing and finding a winner. He has no idea and just picks on barrier numbers." O'Keeffe quips.

In his 40th year at the MVRC, Synan remains humble, "I'm really proud to have worked at the one Club where I've achieved 40 years. I'm so thankful to Moonee Valley for everything that they've done for me. The Club owes me nothing and it's all about what I can give back to them and the industry," Synan remarks.

"Keith Upton was the one who started all this when he employed me as an apprentice gardener in 1984. Then I worked for Ian Trevethan, then Martin Breen and then Greg Barker. I took over as Racecourse and Facilities Manager when Greg left the Club. I actually lived on-course out near the Maintenance Compound for 20 years. All my kids grew up with Moonee Valley as their backyard which was fun," Synan reflects.

Warren Williams has been alongside Synan for a long time and added "Joining MVRC the same year as Marty, I was fortunate to witness Marty's enthusiasm towards racecourse maintenance. Marty never shied from work and was also looking for a job. His positive attitude and jovial manner within his work mates created long term friendships, that still exist to this day. His work ethic enabled his progression through the ranks to the position of Racecourse and Facilities Manager. Marty and I have also worked closely through our time on the ARMA Committee where we have created a long-term friendship. Congratulations mate!"

Synan's dedication and resilience inspire everyone lucky enough to know him. As he celebrates another milestone in his amazing career, Synan's legacy shines brightly, showing the unwavering passion and dedication that makes horse racing so special.

GALLOPING INTO THE DIGITAL ERA.

The Australian Racecourse Managers Association (ARMA) is embracing the digital age and recently joined LinkedIn. As the leading organisation in racecourse management across Australia, ARMA's new LinkedIn page promises to be a hub of industry insights, networking opportunities, and updates on the latest trends, innovations and projects in turf management.

By joining ARMA on LinkedIn, industry professionals, enthusiasts, and stakeholders gain access to a wealth of knowledge and resources tailored to the unique challenges and advancements in racecourse management. From turf maintenance techniques to sustainability initiatives and event management strategies, ARMA's LinkedIn page is set to become an indispensable platform for anyone passionate about the racing industry.

So whether you're a turf expert, an industry supplier or just love horse racing, following ARMA on LinkedIn is your ticket to staying in the loop.

Follow the Australian Racecourse Managers Association on LinkedIn today!



Lockyer Valley Turf Club

Author- Terry Kirkwood

Since late October – early November through to today, we have had very ordinary weather. The forecast had predicted coming out of winter, that we would be receiving very little rain and extreme hot weather. To the contrary, we have had the total opposite. We have experienced very wet, humid conditions. I have been the track manager here for 8yrs and I have never had to deal with as much disease as I have this year. Yes, we have had very hot days, the hottest day being 43.5 degrees; recorded in the middle of November 2023 during track renovations. The humidity has been anywhere from 60-100%. Most times during the rain, the humidity does decrease, however this year, for some reason, it hasn't. The major disease I have experienced this year is fungi disease. I have applied spray 14 days apart & 21 days apart. I'm on my 6th spray since December 2023. Only now am I starting to get it under control. I have changed class and brand of fungicide spray on several occasions, with some positive results. Unfortunately, the disease comes back. I am about to give the track another spray with a different chemical again, and we are now starting to get a little bit of cooler weather & the humidity has dropped off considerably. My practice with grubs etc. I spray every 4 weeks, whether the grubs are there or not, for piece of mind. Some of the track managers use other products and spray once every 4 months, however I find it better to spray every 4 weeks. Hoping for a reprieve and more favourable weather.



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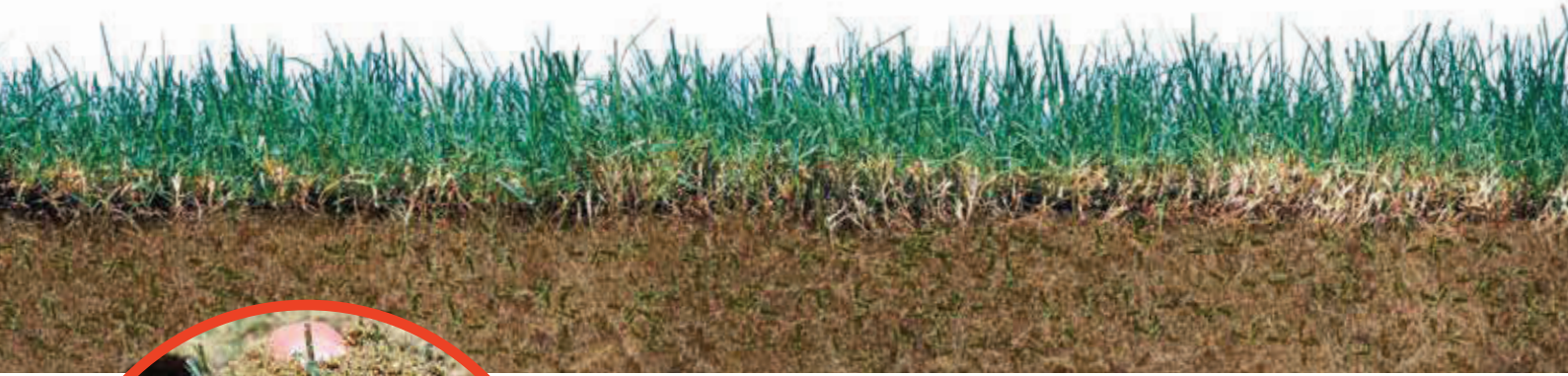
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