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The 2025 golf season in Ontario has underscored the increasing complexity and environmental pressures facing turfgrass managers across the province. Winter extended well into spring, followed by an abrupt transition to early and intense summer heat. June and July brought extended periods of drought, punctuated by storm events that delivered not only heavy rainfall but also persistent high humidity—creating ideal conditions for disease development.

This rapid swing from cold to hot weather made it difficult to properly time preventative pest and disease control applications. Water management has been critical, as turf managers navigated periods of high humidity, extreme heat, and drought, all while trying to maintain optimal playing conditions and protect long-term turf health and sustainability.

Crabgrass thrived under these conditions, and where pre-emergent herbicide timing was missed or ineffective, infestations have become difficult to manage. Annual Bluegrass Weevil (ABW), a significant pest especially in southern Ontario, showed relatively low spring pressure but has seen a notable resurgence with second-generation activity emerging in late July and early August. For those not keeping up with scouting and control, ABW damage can be severe.

Pythium diseases have been reported across the province—both Pythium root dysfunction and Pythium blight—particularly during stretches of high heat and humidity. Other patch diseases, including summer patch, take-all patch, and brown patch, have also made appearances, particularly on compacted or poorly drained soils.

Dollar spot continues to be the most persistent and widespread disease across fairways and closely mown turf. Early conducive conditions in May led to outbreaks that have lingered throughout the season. Anthracnose has also re-emerged with force, particularly on annual bluegrass putting greens under stress from heat and low fertility.

Growth management has been another ongoing challenge. Rapid mineralization under warm and humid conditions has caused flushes of turf growth, making it difficult to meet performance expectations for green speeds and firmness. This has put additional pressure on mowing and rolling schedules, equipment, and staff.

Water use efficiency, hand-watering practices, and soil moisture management continue to be essential tools for managing both turf health and resource sustainability. As always, cultural practices remain key in supporting turf resilience under environmental stress.

As we move into August, the challenge of maintaining team motivation during the “Dog Days” of summer becomes real—especially following a season of physically demanding conditions. Creative approaches, including team incentives like ice cream days and cold drinks, have helped maintain morale during this crucial stretch.

Robotic mowers continue to be a hot topic across the province. Automated mowing offers the promise of consistent, high-quality cuts with reduced mechanical wear and lower labour demands. While challenges persist—especially with power supply, connectivity, and sensor accuracy—the technology is rapidly improving. Many in the industry believe robotic solutions could play an integral role in the future of golf course maintenance, particularly as staffing challenges continue.

Despite the adversity, Ontario superintendents continue to demonstrate their adaptability and professionalism. The 2025 season has been a testament to the importance of proactive management, effective planning, and staying current with new technologies and agronomic strategies. Collaboration with industry peers and continuing education through CGSA and provincial associations remain key in navigating these evolving challenges.