

FROST TRAFFIC UPDATE

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In response to renewed interest on the topic of frost traffic on golf course turfgrass, Oregon State University has developed a trial to address these questions. A trial was initiated January 6, 2026 on an annual bluegrass putting green to assess the impact of golf foot traffic on turfgrass health (i.e. damage) and putting green playability (smoothness, trueness, and green speed). Treatments included three levels of simulated golf foot traffic, 0, 50, 100 golf rounds per day. Foot traffic was performed between 8 to 9 am and 1 to 2 pm (golf rounds split over am and pm), using golf shoes equipped with softspikes.

Weather conditions during the first three weeks of the trial have been favorable for frost formation, with at least 12 days of turfgrass surface temperatures below freezing when morning foot traffic occurred. The week of Jan 19th to 25th was particularly cold, with several occasions when the soil was frozen to a 0.5 to 1" depth. Preliminary data from this trial indicates that golf foot traffic under frost conditions is causing damage, particularly at higher levels of golf rounds (100 simulated golf rounds; see Image 1). Initial symptoms of turfgrass injury were observed on January 21st and have progressively worsened up to this point. These initial findings suggest that annual bluegrass putting greens with frost present and surface temperatures at or below freezing ($\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$) are susceptible to significant turfgrass injury and should be avoided. Additional data is being collected to define what weather conditions predispose annual bluegrass putting greens to damage and what impact golf foot traffic during frost has on putting green playability.

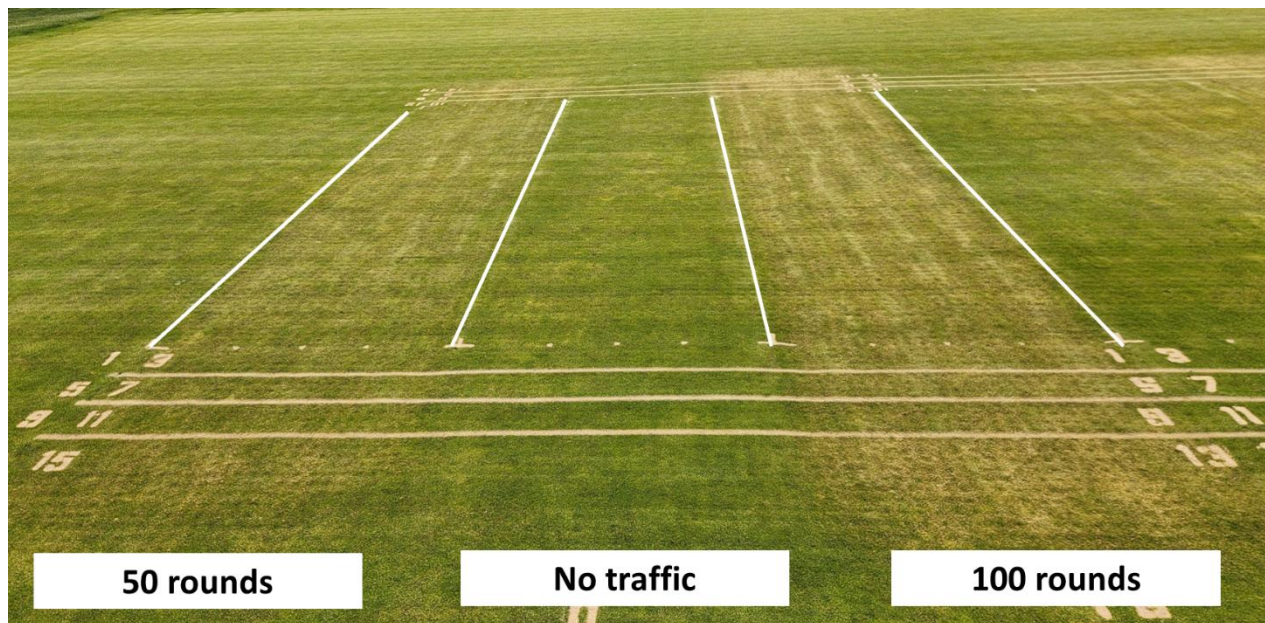


Image 1. Damage to an annual bluegrass putting green from simulated golf foot traffic during frost, taken January 26, 2026. (Photo credit: Brian McDonald)