

OFFICE OF SPORT

Managing Playing Surfaces During Drought

AFL • Cricket • Football • Rugby League • Rugby Union





▶ Getting the most out of our playing surfaces

The quality of grass playing surfaces across NSW is deteriorating with the drought.

These tips will assist field owners and users in making a difference to their playing surfaces and keeping everyone safe.

The effective management of playing surfaces during drought periods requires strong collaboration and effective communication between councils, facility owners, sports clubs, coaches and sport participants. Working together will go a long way to:

- providing better quality surfaces for matches;
- a safer environment for playing sport; and
- enhancing field durability in the future.

▶ Tips for grass playing surfaces during the drought

- Cease training on the main playing areas or at least move from the high wear zones.
- Rotate the area used for training drills and consider other options to avoid overuse.
- Re-angle lighting during training to shine on adjacent areas and off the main field.
- Wear sneakers for training, instead of moulded or screw in studs.
- Consider doing sprinting and agility work off the field.
- Avoid regular use of the sidelines as turning points in agility training drills.
- Avoid using the field outlines for sprint training or running warm ups.





- Appoint a volunteer ground manager to monitor whether the field is safe for play and to be the point of contact between council, facility owner, club committee and user groups.
- Before any training and competition, undertake a pre-activity inspection of the sport grounds to monitor field quality.
- Monitor the fields throughout a heavy competition day to address safety issues if they arise.
- Use the areas behind the goals or at the side of the fields for warm ups.
- Cross training, gym or pool sessions can be a great break from normal training.
- Use training poles or portable goals for football shooting practice instead of the goals.
- Use artificial markers to mark out bowling run-ups for cricket.
- Consider alternate game formats for training such as indoor futsal for football.
- Consider restricted casual use access in high wear zones.
- Change playing habits by shortening matches or having shorter pre-seasons.
- Raise mowing/cutting heights to reduce plant stress.

Most Importantly:

- Educate on the risks of injuries and abrasions when diving and stopping on hard ground.
- The duty of care to players, spectators and volunteers on game day is critical and complying with any council or ground owner restrictions is essential.

► Building resilience for the future

It is important to make the most of any rainfall and to consider some longer term options including:

- recycling water;
- water harvesting including capture, storage for later re-use; and
- the installation of all-weather training surfaces shared with other clubs.

Some tips for water use:

- Test recycled water to ensure it won't damage the surfaces;
- The best time to water is late at night or early morning; and
- One good, deep water may be better than several times a week.

Good facility management should be essential during drought and everyone is involved. Tough decisions on surface safety, fixtures coordination and pitch availability will be required so its important to keep users up-to-date with signage, newsletters, websites and social media.

For further information on drought, visit the Drought Hub at dpi.nsw.gov.au/drougthub