

3G FOOTBALL TURF PITCHES GET READY FOR RE-OPENING



REVOLUTIONISING MAINTENANCE

INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable that all facilities will be affected to some extent by the recent lockdown however if your 3G pitch was well maintained before the Covid-19 restrictions then it should be in a good position to quickly recover afterwards. Low or non-use of a surface can sometimes be as detrimental as over-use. Similarly, the effects of winter weather can have negative implications for the pitch.

So, there are some key factors that need to be taken into account both during the lockdown period and at the point you can reopen your pitch.

WHAT WILL HAVE HAPPENED TO MY 3G FOOTBALL TURF PITCH?

In short, the period of closure is unlikely to have increased the wear or degradation of the construction of your surface - however with low or no maintenance and use it will have given an opportunity for the following three issues to arise:

1 – DEBRIS At this time of year, many trees and bushes will have already shed their dead leaves and other detritus. If this matter was removed before the current lockdown then with the wet and windy winter weather it is likely to be decomposing and mulching down into your surface potentially compromising both drainage and safe performance.

2- VEGETATION This time of year can be the start of the growing season for all sorts of vegetation (weeds, grass, moss and algae). Unfortunately, and inevitably an unused and unmaintained surface will provide a good growing environment for this matter to quickly grow and spread, particularly from the perimeter inwards where natural vegetation is already present and growing on the outside of your facility.

3 – INFILL COMPACTION & DISPLACEMENT The heavy winter rains and snow in areas can lead to compaction and hardening of the rubber infill, with the finer particulate being washed to the lower reaches of the surface. Additionally, some of the infill may have displaced with the weather and been blown or washed to the edges of the pitch.

WHAT YOU CAN DO DURING LOCKDOWN IN PREPARATION FOR YOUR FACILITY REOPENING:

Following the Governments guidelines and advice around Covid-19 and when it is safe and practicable to do so, an initial surface inspection should be completed to assess the condition of your facility. As part of the inspection all seams and lines should be checked as cold, freezing temperatures can cause any weak areas in these joins to lift and fail. Any areas of concern should be reported to your maintainer, installer or manufacturer to seek their advice.

Where you have suitably trained and experienced staff, groundsman or volunteers and, in some instances, the correct machinery and equipment then your in-house regime* should be as follows:

*(*If you are unable to undertake any or all of these tasks then please contact a specialist maintenance company. Ensure that they can provide you with a detailed description and accurate quote for any works they undertake and can support this with appropriate references and the correct health and safety documentation with particular consideration to Covid-19 working practices).*

First priority is to remove any **DEBRIS** from the surface and dispose of this accordingly. This is best achieved using either a leaf blower, collection mat or sweeper. Where these are not available then a brush, spade and wheel barrow (or similar) will work but will obviously take more time and be more labour intensive. Debris removal is always an ongoing maintenance activity and should be undertaken at regular intervals (min. weekly).



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Secondly, where **VEGETATION** growth may have spread into the main playing areas then appropriate herbicidal (*refer to manufacturers guidelines*) treatment and removal should be carried out at the earliest opportunity. Where growth is mainly restricted to the perimeter then this should be managed, treated and removed when convenient. In the right conditions and even after treatment Vegetation will start to regrow so regular treatment/removal will be necessary.

Finally, with the **INFILL COMPACTION & DISPLACEMENT** of the rubber infill the surface should be thoroughly decompacted, brushed and redressed/topped-up as necessary (particularly the areas of high use). The machinery used for this should be capable of decompacting and rotating the infill, and have an integrated sieve, vacuum and filter function to ensure any surface debris and dirt are separated and removed and not buried deeper into the surface where they could become a problem in the future.

Once these initial tasks have been completed then you can then start to resume your regular maintenance programme fully or in part.

Prior to the current lockdown if your surface was already old, in a poor condition or not previously well-maintained then it is likely that the surface will have continued to deteriorate further. Many surfaces in this category will have suffered through the Winter, which has been one of the wettest on records causing facilities to be unusable at times during that period. If your surface falls into this category then it is strongly recommended that you seek the advice of a specialist maintainer to arrange a full assessment at their earliest availability. From this they should be able to provide a comprehensive action plan including benefits (short or long-term) of any necessary renovation or rejuvenation works.

If you choose not to follow this guidance then it is important to stress that you may notice a more rapid deterioration in the performance and drainage of your surface. This in turn will lead to more downtime for your facility and inevitably more expensive and intensive renovation works to rectify the problems.

OTHER AREAS TO CONSIDER:

Whilst the surface is very an important element of your facility, other items such as goals, nets, posts, gates, fence and even floodlights may have suffered through a period of inactivity and no-use. These areas should all be checked as part of your initial assessment and any areas of concern should be recorded and reported accordingly.

Minor maintenance should include tightening nuts and bolts, securing nets, oiling hinges and winders and cleaning parts that may come into contact with users. Any equipment that is damaged should be removed and either repaired or replaced as necessary.

If in doubt with any of the above then it is strongly advised that you seek professional advice from experienced maintenance companies. Please be aware that demand for their services may be extremely high during and after this period and their capacity to carry out works will be limited by the availability of trained staff and suitable machinery and equipment. It is important however that you do the maintenance correctly and effectively and therefore, if necessary, employ the services of a reputable company that ensures the advice you seek and service you receive delivers the right results.