



## Moisture Management of Skinned Infields

Water is crucial for the safety and playability of an infield. Knowing how much water to put on at the right time will make all the difference in how your infield skin performs. No matter how much money you spend on the "PERFECT" dirt, if you do not water properly it will fail. Water can act as the glue that holds the infield together, keeping the ball down, and making for a more consistent playable surface.

### How much to water?

Prior to a game the entire profile of your infield skin should be saturated. The infield skin zone should be a minimum of 4 inches. If you have a good infield mix (standard 70% sand 30% combined silt and clay screened at 2mm) you will never get the water to move all the way through the profile so it is imperative that you have a good grade, ½% -1% even all the way across with no low areas to accumulate standing water. The night before a game the infield should be flooded so that the entire profile absorbs the water like a sponge. You will know when you get to this point b/c the water will start to stand on the surface. This process can take up to an hour depending on water pressure and may take 2-3 different soakings to fill up the profile. Once you accomplish this it will be easier to keep up with it on a daily basis and will not take as much water each time to achieve a saturated profile. Of course the amount of water you put out will vary significantly depending on temperatures, amount of sunlight, and day lengths.

### When to water?

You only need to have a moist infield if you are playing on it. If the field does not have play on it for weeks at a time it is perfectly fine to allow it to dry out all the way. You will need to think at least 1-2 days ahead of a game and start your watering in order to catch up after a dry spell like this. When the field is being played on every day it should be flooded out at night after the game is over. The next morning is the perfect time to nail drag b/c the conditions will be right. Nail drag in 3 directions. As soon as the top layer is dry, finish drag and then do another heavy water prior to play. As you get within 30 minutes of play be careful not to flood out, but just water lighter where needed. In between games do a light drag and water as much as possible prior to the next game.

### Ways to help you get this huge amount of water out?

Increase your water pressure by adding a booster pump. Use a one inch hose with a one inch nozzle and one inch fittings. Add a separate zone around your infield and arc that has high speed rotor heads dedicated to your infield skin. Adjust existing heads that may be set at 180 degrees or 238 degrees to 360 in periods of hot dry weather. Apply for a variance with the city if water restrictions are in place. State that it is a health and safety issue for your players and most likely they will allow you to water your skin.

### Conditioner

A thin layer of conditioner has to be applied on top in order to make this water work for you. If you do not have conditioner on top then your infield clay will stick to your tools, equipment, and players spikes. Conditioner will also act as a mulch and help hold moisture in your infield.

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