What to Do When the Infield is Too Wet / Too Dry

Do **NOT** play on an infield that is too wet **OR** too dry.

Both require maintenance to make them playable and safe for players.

Determining Playability for Wet Infields

- HAA’s Thunder and Lightning Policy should always be considered as the first priority when it comes to game delays and cancellations.

- If a game has started and it is raining, or the forecast shows a high likelihood of inclement weather, the game must be stopped at a point where there is enough time to prep the infield and batter’s boxes (and pitching mounds) for the incoming weather and to limit infield damage. Prep work for upcoming rain includes:
  - Batter’s boxes should be covered (including the pitcher’s mound on Field 1).
  - The portable pitcher’s mounds should be removed from the field.
  - The bases should be removed and the receptacles plugged with foam.
  - Roll the entire infield with a roller if time allows.

- Games should be called/delayed immediately upon heavy rain. If shoes and cleats are leaving greater than ½” depressions, the game should be called/delayed. If standing water is starting to develop, even a small puddle, the game should be called/delayed. Only delay a game over cancelling a game if you know that you will have time to work the infield after the rain stops and that the weather will be suitable for drying it out. This post rain work will last at minimum 1 hour after the rain stops.

- If a game has not started, it is raining, and it will continue to rain, then the field is **NOT** playable. Cancel the game if there is a game after your game and you cannot delay for at least 1 hour after the rain stops.

- If a game has not started and the forecast shows a high likelihood of inclement weather whereas a cancellation would be necessary, then do **NOT** start the game. Cancel the game at least 1 hour beforehand as to avoid ump fees and inform the concession stand coordinator.
Visual Examples Showing the Infield is Too Wet to Play On:

- Extremely Soft
- Standing Water
- Still Too Soft
Post Rain Work to Make Infields Playable

- Do NOT step on, drive on, or work on an infield that leaves a depression greater than ½” deep and/or that feels unstable due to ground movement.

- DO NOT USE FIELD DRY / QUICK DRY UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!

- Take note of exact standing water locations. You will need to repair these areas later.

- For standing water, ONLY use sponges (located in the dugout sheds) to remove water. Ensure the ground you are walking on to get to the standing water puddle is firm enough and you are not leaving deeper than ½” footprint depressions. If not, find another route and/or wait for the ground to dry more. Place the sponge on top of the water and compress the sponge with your hands. Be careful not to press so hard that you are deforming the infield dirt underneath. After the sponge has absorbed water, remove the sponge and squeeze out the water in the foul territory grass.

![Image of person using sponge to remove water](image1)

(Should have picked a better path to the water and walked too far into soft ground. Left foot imprints. DO NOT DO THIS!)

![Image of person with sponge](image2)

(Good choice for path to puddle)
After ALL standing water is gone and shoes and tires leave a depression **less** than ½” deep, you should nail drag the infield. Nail drag depth should be no more than ¼” deep into the DuraEdge (approximately the width of a pencil). **DO NOT NAIL DRAG LOWER. ENSURE BASES ARE REMOVED AND ALL RECEPTACLES ARE PLUGGED WITH FOAM.** The nail drag should penetrate the top dressing and scratch the DuraEdge. Set your depth and move the nail drag unit forward 6 feet. Stop and check the depth of cut. Adjust as needed. Move forward again 6 feet and stop and check the depth of cut. Once the depth of cut looks good, continue to nail drag the entire infield.

- Wait 30 minutes or longer until the infield dries. During this wait time, rake the entire grass infield edge in order to bring the topdressing back onto the infield that migrated off during the rain. Rake from the grass to the dirt.

- Add Calcined Clay to the areas that were low spots that you took note of previously. Don’t forget where these areas are because you will need to remember them for a step postgame.
• Follow up the nail drag 30 minutes later with using the large steel screen mat drag (OR PREFERABLY A COCOA MAT IF AVAILABLE). If the steel mat becomes clogged while dragging then you should stop and clear it out and consider waiting for the infield to dry out more before continuing. A cocoa mat is a better choice because it helps to absorb moisture and will not clog while still laying out the topdressing to an even surface.

PLAY BALL!! – But don’t forget there is postgame work to be done!

• **POSTGAME** Walk to the areas that had standing water on them. Remember you took note of these exact areas before. Repair low spot areas in the infield by:
  
  - Using a broom located in the dugout storage sheds to brush back the topdressing from the damaged or low lying infield area and the surrounding area (BE CAREFUL THAT YOU ARE ONLY MOVING TOPDRESSING)
  - Using a rake or knife, score the underlying DuraEdge
  - Add new DuraEdge dirt (the dirt mound is located behind the outfield shed) and tamp down until a flat and a complete repair is made
  - Moisten the newly repaired area
  - Brush back the topdressing over the repaired area

• If the low spots occurred in the batter’s box (or pitching mound clay areas on Field 1) then do the following:
  
  - Using a broom to brush back the topdressing from the damaged or low lying batter’s box (or pitching mound) area and the surrounding area (BE CAREFUL THAT YOU ARE ONLY MOVING TOPDRESSING)
  - Using a rake or knife, score the underlying DuraPitch
  - Add new DuraPitch clay (located in bags in the dugout shed or outside of the outfield shed) and tamp down until a flat and a complete repair is made
  - Moisten the newly repaired area
  - Brush back the topdressing over the repaired area

• Complete all other postgame responsibilities listed in the Coach’s Field Maintenance Responsibility Guide (see HAA site).
How to Fix an Infield that is Too Dry

- **Do NOT** attempt to play on an infield that is too dry. Player safety as well as infield durability will be compromised.

- An effective method for determining if you have enough moisture in the surface is the “key test.” If the moisture level is correct, you should be able to push a key down into the surface with minimal resistance and minimal material left on the key. If you cannot get your key into the skin, you need more moisture.

- First, nail drag the infield. This allows the surface to be broken up so that moisture can absorb into the soil.

- Allow enough time before games start to properly water the infield. It can take anywhere from 1/2 hour to 1 hour to water an infield. If you have limited time, focus on the position areas and sliding areas. Use a hose and sprinkler or hand nozzle if going the quick route for limited time.

- Prior to a game, it is best to apply enough water to the infield skin surface to the point where there is almost a standing water condition on the infield mix. Use the 1 hour before game time for water to reabsorb into the soil.

- Nail drag the infield a second time after watering while ensuring the drag path and pattern is different from the first nail drag process.

- Add additional expanded shale to the infield surface to help maintain moisture in the infield skin surface. You can focus the concentration of the shale on sparse infield mix areas.

- **POSTGAME** It is best to do the deep watering at the end of the day when the games are over and the field can be rested for the night.

- Releasing compaction from the infield surface once or twice in the summer is another method recommended. This will keep the surface from getting too hard. This is best achieved using an ABI Force or Rascal equipped with profile blades™ that can be set to penetrate an inch or more under the surface, thereby releasing the compaction from below with minimal surface disturbance. It is best to do this before the infield skin becomes too dry and compacted or after a rain event, otherwise, it will be difficult to engage the blades into the skin surface and you will not be able to achieve the desired results.
• The home plate and mound areas need daily moisture to keep from drying and cracking out quickly. These areas should be tarped—tarps help seal the moisture in, while keeping excess moisture out.

• If the field is not being used during the summer, weekly grooming and dragging should still take place to help limit the amount of weeds that can grow in the infield.