

Wet Weather Ground Use Assessment Guidelines

Wet Weather Ground Use

This document explains how wet weather ground use is managed and what is expected of sports clubs and hirers when grounds are impacted by wet weather. It combines a **Quick Reference** to support quick, on-the-day decisions with **Full User Group Guidance** that sets out club responsibilities, procedures and compliance requirements.

By following this guidance, clubs and hirers help protect playing surfaces, reduce injury risk, and ensure grounds remain available and safe for ongoing use across the season.

Who decides if grounds are closed?

Weekdays (Monday up to 4.00pm Friday): Council controls ground closures and provides updates via the Council website.

Weekends (from 4.00pm Friday to 8.30am Monday): The allocated User Group decides whether the ground can be used.

When is a wet weather assessment required?

A wet weather assessment must be completed if surface water is visible, the ground is soft or spongy, or there has been recent rainfall.

What should you check?

Before you play check for:

- Amount of rainfall
- Ground softness
- Surface water
- Grass cover
- Type of Activity
- Number of games

If unsure, do not play.

What do you need to submit?

If an assessment is required, complete the Wet Weather Ground Assessment Questions via the QR Code on Page 2 of this document. Please submit an assessment for each field. If you cannot complete the QR Code please reach out to the Major Venues & Facilities team at recreation@maitland.nsw.gov.au

What happens if damage occurs?

Playing on closed or damaged grounds may result in penalty fees, repair costs, or closing of grounds for weeks to repair. Failure to submit assessments or repeated damage may result in suspension of ground usage.

Wet Weather Ground Use – Full User Group Guidance

This section provides additional guidance for clubs, associations, schools and hirers to help make informed decisions during wet weather and protect Council sportsgrounds for long-term use.

Amount of Rainfall

Decisions should consider not only rainfall on the day, but rainfall over the preceding days and forecast conditions. Heavy or prolonged rainfall, overnight rain or rain forecast during play significantly increases the risk of damage. Even short, intense rainfall events can require cancellation depending on ground conditions.

Ground Softness

Ground softness occurs when the surface sinks underfoot and does not recover, or when water rises to the surface when walked on. Soft ground is vulnerable to compaction and tearing, particularly during running, turning and tackling. If deep footprints are left or the ground feels spongy, users should not continue.

Surface Water

Surface water refers to visible water sitting on the playing surface. This indicates the ground is saturated and cannot absorb further moisture. Playing on saturated turf can quickly cause rutting, soil displacement, long-term damage and increase the risk of injury to players.

Grass Cover

Grass cover helps protect the soil profile and distribute wear. Reduced grass coverage, particularly during winter, increases the risk of damage when combined with wet conditions. Grounds with thin or worn grass cover should be managed conservatively in wet weather to prevent long-term deterioration.

Type and Amount of Activity

The intensity, duration and type of activity must be considered. Multiple games, training sessions, high-contact sports or full-day use place greater stress on wet surfaces. Damage caused during a single wet weather event can make a ground unplayable for weeks. User Groups should consider impacts, particularly where multiple users share a field.

Key Message for User Groups

User Groups are encouraged to take a cautious approach when assessing grounds in wet weather. Protecting the playing surface ensures safe conditions, fair access for all users and ongoing availability throughout the season. When uncertainty exists, postponing or relocating activity is the responsible choice.

