



TRIDENT
LAWNMOWERS

GROOMING & VERTICUTTING REELS



GROOMING



I am going to attempt to write a piece on the differences and similarities between grooming, verticutting, grooming reels and verticutting reels in a domestic situation. I will not get too technical, partly because I'll make myself look silly.

The advice given will be relating to processes appropriate to a Mediterranean climate such as Perth.

Let's start with the blades; Grooming reels and hence grooming blades may mean different things to different people. For example, our grooming reels look quite different to the more basic type of reel, which is used at the front of a greens mowers to fluff up the turf before it goes into the cutting blades.

Our grooming blades are made with spring steel and have 11 tungsten tips. They also have 5 fans, which help with the structure of the blade and to throw the clippings into the catcher.

Compared to verticutting the blades will typically be closer together.



SCOTT BONNAR GROOMING REEL



GROOMING BLADE with tungsten tips

THE PURPOSE OF GROOMING

Grooming reels are designed to remove horizontal runners and organic material if done regularly. When these are removed the turf is stimulated to develop new growing points from the crown. This is basically the part of the turf between the soil and the leaf including the stem and runners/stolons. This removal of the horizontal growth encourages vertical growth.

The process essentially redesigns the turf canopy, which is basically the general term for the leaf.

Repeated mowing with a groomer along with a well set cylinder mower will also encourage or condition the turf to grow closer to the soil, making for a firmer, more open canopy. This allows improved water penetration, soil air exchange and light penetration. This process also encourages a drier environment, which will reduce the potential of diseases such as dollar spot or leaf spot. The new growth will be healthier and more resilient to biotic (eg. disease and parasites) and abiotic (weather conditions) stresses.

They are not designed to go into the soil or deep into the crown of the turf.

Depending on the state of your turf and the application you are using the reel for, the reel should typically be set at about the same height or slightly below the height that the grass is normally cut.

Grooming is good practice prior to mowing as it “fluffs up” the turf helping it to stand up straighter which means more of the grass blade will go more cleanly into the reel helping to achieve a neater cut.



WHEN TO GROOM

When to groom will depend on many factors, but the main ones should be:

- The type of grass you have
- How quickly your grass grows
- How quickly the turf can become thatchy

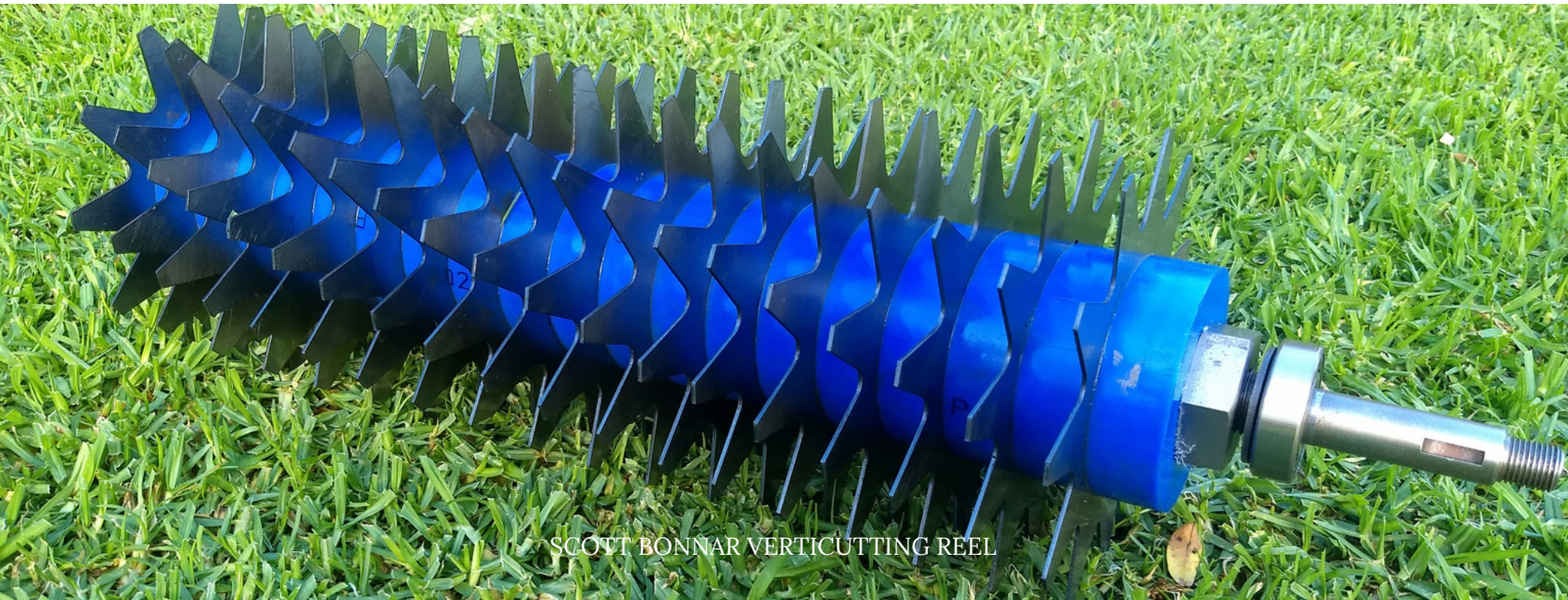
Buffalo for example, being a broadleaf grass and having thicker runners that grow over the top of the ground or themselves will need a lot less grooming than a typical couch. It may only need 3 or 4 grooms over the course of 5 months from November to April.

Whereas common couch can benefit from light weekly grooms during that period. The frequency of grooming will depend on growing conditions. In the Perth region the conditions from December through to April will encourage turf growth much more than the winter months. Therefore, grooming would be advised much more regularly. Some turf varieties such as the Soft Leaf Buffalos grow very little in Perth's winters and hence grooming will not need doing at all until summer.

VERTICUTTING/VERTIMOWING/SCARIFYING

The name of the reel or the process may depend where you live or what industry you are in. We will just be focusing on verticutting and verticutting reels for now.

Vertimowing or scarifying, which is a process where the reel will go below the soil level and is more invasive than verticutting or grooming. We definitely wouldn't recommend modifying a domestic lawnmower like a Scott Bonnar to do so. They are not designed to handle the stress involved with scarifying. Plus, the travel speed of most reel mowers is too fast.



SCOTT BONNAR VERTICUTTING REEL

VERTICUTTING

Verticutting can be viewed as a process somewhere between grooming and scarifying. The verticutting blades penetrate deep into the crown area of the plant and severs stolons and stems. Verticutting aims to reduce or remove thatch, including dead leaf, stem, stolons and other organic material.

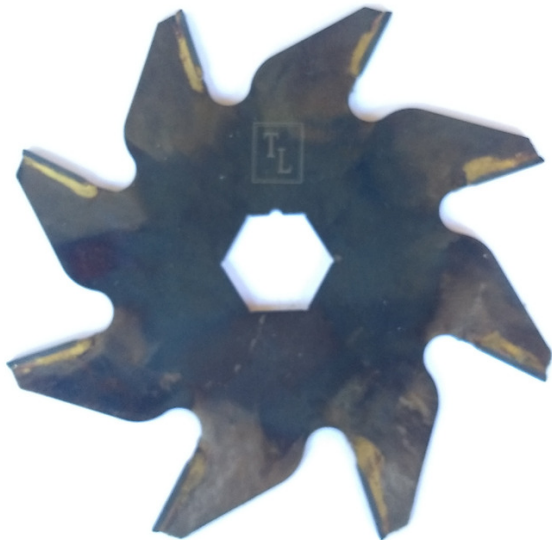
A verticutting reel will generally have wider spacing's than a groomer and have stronger blades.

Generally it is done in spring but can also be done during the summer months (especially in Perth) and into autumn if needed.

Most fine leaf turf will benefit from scarifying once a year. If regular cylinder mowing and grooming through the growing season is undertaken verticutting may not be needed. However, if your turf is prone to thatching then one or two extra verticuts may also be beneficial throughout the growing season.



VERTICUTTING BLADE
WITHOUT TUNGSTEN TIPS



VERTICUTTING BLADE WITH
TUNGSTEN TIPS

GROOMING WITH A VERTICUTTER

Theoretically a verticutter can be used to groom with. If the verticutting reel is set at the height at about the height of cut it could be considered grooming. However, the design of the blades will mean it won't be as effective as grooming blades at helping the turf to stand up and remove any organic material or throw the clippings into the catcher.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VERTICUTTING & GROOMING

- Verticutting is more invasive and recovery time is longer
- Verticutting reels have wider spacing's between blades
- Verticutting blades are designed to go deeper into the crown and thatch layer
- Grooming can be done more frequently
- Verticutting aims to remove more thatch
- Grooming reels throw the clippings more effectively and "fluff up" the turf



Thatch

When an organic layer of thatch forms leaf growth will occur at the top of the canopy rather than at the true plant crown. As a result, the following conditions will occur and compromise the health and growth of the plant:

- Root growth will diminish due to poor soil and air exchange.
- Organic material will not properly decompose because of reduced microbial activity.
- The thatch layer will trap moisture, grass seed, fertilisers, pesticides and topdressing, preventing them from reaching the soil and roots.

Thatch can also be responsible for lawnmowers being falsely accused of cutting lower on one side, scalping, getting bogged and cutting poorly.

Verticutting or scarifying will be required more frequently to reduce and remove excessive plant material if grooming practices are not in place.

Apart from water or a lack of, thatch is the biggest threat to a good looking lawn. If a lawn is over watered and/or over fertilised, cut too infrequently, cut with a rotary mower or cut too high for example thatch can build up. Some turf varieties are much more predisposed to thatching. Common couch for example is more likely to become thachy than Santa Ana or the newer couch varieties.



CAN YOU GROOM BUFFALO OR KIKUYU?

Yes. We find that a grooming reel is good for picking up buffalo runners that grow over the top of the grass and can be quite noticeable after cutting with a reel mower. They are also very good at thinning out buffalo and Kikuyu without being as violent as a vertimow. Scalping in spring and light grooming of broadleaf grass will mean a quicker recovery time than vertimowing broadleaf grass like Buff and Kikuyu.

Relatively wider spacers in the grooming blades works best with these types of grass. The wider spacing's will also reduce the cost of the reel.



Nathan Morocco (Turf guru and all round good guy)

“Groomers are designed to essentially nick into the turf canopy and cut and remove horizontal runners and organic material. Designed to promote the plant to grow vertically stimulating new growth from crown of the plant. In hindsight grooming regularly is promoting fresh and healthy growth and therefore becoming less susceptible to disease and stress. The only similarities between verti cutting and grooming is they both use vertical blades. Verticutting penetrates deep into the crown of the plant cutting stolons and stems. Which is the process of removing thatch”.

Grooming reels throw the clippings in to the catcher better

Verticutting reels are less expensive

Grooming reels have tungsten tips

Verticutting reels generally have wider spacings

NEED SOME ADVICE?

CONTACT US NOW



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