

AFL/CRICKET AUSTRALIA SYNTHETIC TURF PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

Synthetic turf technology is constantly evolving and improving and is now commonly used by many major sports throughout the world. Adoption of these surfaces, in combination with natural turf surfaces, is important to meet the current, and expected future demand for sports fields, particularly in urban growth areas for both Australian Football and Cricket. The AFL and Cricket Australia (CA) endorse the use of these surfaces through their synthetic turf program.





Background

In 2007, Federation University Australia (formerly the University of Ballarat) developed criteria for the use of synthetic turf for Australian Football and Cricket commissioned by the AFL, Cricket Australia, Sport & Recreation Victoria and JLT Trustees (the insurer to both the AFL and Cricket Australia). An expert panel regularly review the criteria to ensure that the products are safe and comparable with the playing characteristics of natural grass.

The AFL and Cricket Australia endorse the playing of community level Australian Football and Cricket on a synthetic turf surface that meets the criteria.

Why Synthetic Turf ?

Synthetic Turf fields can address a number of issues that can impact on participation, including insufficient venues to meet demand in a given region. This is a common issue in urban growth areas where the quantity of open space is limited.

The key benefits are:

- Synthetic turf fields can sustain significantly higher use than natural turf, with a synthetic field equivalent to three natural turf fields. This caters for the continued growth of teams and demand for sports fields in both Cricket and Australian Football.
 - Increased capacity (both active use, through sports training/competition and passive recreation by community outside of programmed training/competition) enhances the physical health of individuals and communities.
 - Synthetic turf fields provide a consistent and safe surface all year round for both Australian Football and Cricket, improving the quality of performance. There is certainty of play associated with these surfaces, i.e. not cancelled as a result of heavy rainfall/storms.
 - Synthetic turf fields relieve pressure on natural grass fields and therefore natural surfaces are less likely to be impacted by overuse problems.
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AFL Cricket Australia Synthetic Turf Certification System

The AFL Cricket Australia Synthetic Turf Certification System has been developed in response to the need for a system to serve and protect AFL CA synthetic field manufacturers whilst giving vital support in meeting the substantial demand for additional fields to meet each sport's future participation needs. Certified products have been subject to a set of stringent laboratory tests, including those for durability, joint strength, resistance to weathering, ball roll and bounce, hardness, critical fall height, traction and abrasion.

The purpose of this system is to ensure compliance with AFL CA requirements to safeguard the health of players and officials, and to guarantee the integrity of the performance of the field. The AFL CA Product Certificate is not intended as a product endorsement beyond one of suitability and acceptability for communities Football and Cricket competitions under AFL CA.

The manufacturer or supplier holding a valid AFL CA Product Certificate may use the below AFL CA Certification Logo and market an AFL CA Certified product. Certified products are listed on AFL CA websites, as are those installers deemed to have sufficient capabilities to install such a product.



Every oval installed must also meet a 'fit for play' second stage of testing that occurs on site once the oval has been laid and filled to produce the playing surface and has been allowed to settle and be played on for one month, or 160 hours of play. This allows consolidation before testing. 'Fit for play' testing on the installed field is undertaken at a variety of locations on the field to ensure compliance across the field and is required every two years to maintain certification that the oval complies with AFL CA standards.

The benefits of the certification process and testing include:

- Ensuring fields have the same playing characteristics as natural turf
- Ensuring quality and durability of the product
- Maximising of player comfort and safety

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“The synthetic surface is just great and a lot of the parents are wrapped with it as there is no mud. They love the surface and I think it is a real community asset.”

Rod Hamilton – AFL South East

“We weren’t too sure what to expect, but it is perfect. You get value for your shots, it is easy to dive on and fielding is perfect. You could not ask for anything better.”

Aaron Straughair – Carlisle Park Vikings Cricket Club

More Information

For more information on the AFL/Cricket Australia Synthetic Turf Program please visit aflcommunity.com.au or email syntheticurf@afl.com.au

