Treated seed is an effective way of keeping fungal attacks at bay

Greenkeepers using perennial ryegrasses are being advised to buy treated seed to ward off fungal attack.

Geoff Taylor, technical officer at Johnsons Seeds, warns that the arrival of the autumn with its warm moist soils, ideal for speedy germination, can often be interspersed with cold nights and heavy dews - predisposing factors for attacks by fungal disease on emerging grass seedlings. The seedbed if poorly prepared, especially when lying too wet (or even too dry), is the cradle for numerous fungal pathogens.

Renovation of thin turf is a prime case for treated seed. Serious losses can occur from the earliest stages - with attacks on ungerminated seeds through the phases of pre- and post-seedling emergence.

Whilst recommended seed rates are designed to allow for these and other causes of seedling mortality, treatments such as Apron T treatment with its potent duo of thiabendazole and propaxyl provide a relatively economical extra measure of protection against severe seedling losses. New sowings can be devastated by the well known 'damping-off' disease which involves a complex of fungi - the two main culprits being fusarium and pythium, respectively associated with excessive dryness and wetness.

"Rapid and even seed development is a prime requirement in autumn to ensure that a new or renovated sward is well established before conditions deteriorate and growth ceases," says Mr Taylor. "Delayed sowings, therefore, are another obvious instance where seed treatment is an essential pre-cursory precaution.

"Faced with the risk of fungal disease, we believe treated seed is a prudent assurance policy that avoids the significant losses of time and money associated with sub-optimal sowing conditions." For further details call Geoff Taylor on 0205 365051.