

**PINK SNOW MOLD (*MICRODOCHIUM* PATCH)****Jon F. Powell**Michigan State University  
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*Microdochium* patch (*Microdochium nivale*), commonly called pink snow mold, is a disease of all cool season turfgrasses that occurs during extended cool (below 60 F) and wet conditions. Although generally thought of as a "snow mold" *Microdochium* patch can last late into the season, and was active into June this year. When occurring under snow cover, the disease will appear as reddish brown to bleached patches of turf 2 inches to 2 feet in diameter. The advancing edge of these patches appears pink due to the pink fungal mycelia, hence the name "pink snow mold". This common name can be deceiving since *Microdochium* patch also occurs without snow. Patches start out with a water soaked appearance changing to a reddish brown. Streaking can often be seen following mowing due to the spread of spores. In this state, the disease is sometimes confused with other diseases, such as copper spot.

Several characteristics can be used to differentiate *Microdochium* patch and copper spot. Unlike *Microdochium*, copper spot is a warm weather disease, occurring at temperatures above 70 F. Microscopically, the spores of *Microdochium* are crescent shaped with up to three septa, whereas spores associated with copper spot are elongated with many septa. A simple test for *Microdochium* patch is to place a plug of infected turf in the refrigerator. Turf infected with *Microdochium* will develop aerial mycelia as the fungus grows well at low temperatures.

Cultural conditions can affect severity of *Microdochium* patch. High nitrogen fertility should be avoided late in the season as succulent tissues are more susceptible. However, maintenance of high potassium levels has been shown to suppress disease activity. Disease is favored by free moisture and high humidity which are increased due to poor drainage, high turf height, excessive thatch, and the use of snow covers.

A broad range of fungicides are available for the management of *Microdochium* patch. To provide disease management fungicides should be used in a preventative program. The use of the benzimidazole fungicides are effective in managing *Microdochium* patch, however, they predispose the turf to *Helminthosporium*, and therefore, should be used in combination with contact fungicides. When extended snow cover is a concern the use of systemic fungicides is required. Otherwise contact fungicides are very effective.