

HOW TO PREDICT OUTBREAKS OF PINK SNOW MOLD

Phil J. Dwyer, Jr. and Joe M. Vargas, Jr.

Michigan State University

Research is underway to identify environmental factors associated with the onset of pink snow mold / *Microdochium* patch. Once we determine the specific factors necessary for pink snow mold to occur we will then be able to: properly time fungicide applications for improved control, reduce the number of total sprays needed, thus saving turfgrass managers money and at the same time reducing environmental inputs. Currently the only estimation of when to treat preventively for this disease is based on the calendar time of year. Many superintendents apply multiple fungicide applications in the hope of providing protection from this disease whether outbreaks are likely or not. Our objective is to provide weather based spray recommendations to replace the current method of spraying that is based only on the time of year.

To identify the environmental factors responsible for a disease outbreak we have closely monitored conditions during the snow mold season (Sept.-June) during the past three years. At the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center in E. Lansing, MI we have installed a weather data logger that measures leaf wetness, soil temperature, soil moisture, air temperature, and relative humidity. Weather monitoring work will be ongoing through the spring of 2003. Our research findings from the fall season of 2000 through present have identified a narrow window of conditions that must be met in order for an epidemic of pink snow mold to occur. The three conditions that we have identified for our prediction model are simple for superintendents to measure/monitor and thus will be easily incorporated into their decision of when and whether or not to spray.

The specific environmental parameters thought to be responsible for pink snow mold outbreaks cannot be made public at this time, as they have not yet been published. It is our hope that by the end of our third complete field season (2003) we will have enough data to publish our results and disseminate our findings to turfgrass managers.