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## Turf insect pest control on a knife-edge

Dr Terry Mabbett looks at how you can control chafer grubs and leatherjackets – the ‘economic pests’ of UK turf

**Five turfs don't offer much in the way of sustenance for insect pests above ground. The two insect pests causing widespread economic damage to managed UK turf are subterranean in habit and feed on the fibrous roots of grass plants.**

UK golf courses largely escape the worst the world has to offer in anthropogenic pest damage to temperate turf. Arthropods are a large group invertebrate animals, mostly small invertebrate animals, mostly in precise biological terms have jointed legs. The group includes insects, arachnids and crustaceans.

Only two true insects, chafer grubs (larval stage of chafers) and leatherjackets (larval stage of craneflies) are economic pests of UK turf. They cause significant direct damage in their own right and have helped boost the turf keeping for a hobby and a business and tearing up turf in the process.

**Chafer grubs and leatherjackets**

Chafer grubs are the larvae of the garden chafers beetle (*Phyllopertha horticola*) and the Welsh chafers beetle (*Hypha platicornis*), while the leatherjacket is the larval stage of the cranefly (*Ephippium* spp) and commonly called black fly. Both juvenile stages are soil-dwelling pests living under turf and feeding on grass roots.

covered turf in the morning and immediately restart the life cycle by laying eggs in the grass sward. Eggs hatch into larvae within two weeks and feeding on turf in starting to feed on the grass roots. Leatherjackets feeding occurs throughout winter, accelerating in spring as the larvae approach maturity and pupation. This is the time when leatherjacket damage first becomes apparent, showing up as slow growth of grass and yellow patches of dead and dying turf. Leatherjacket infestation is

grubs, 3–4 cm long and with a tough, knobby head and feet, as the common name suggests. Their heads are wider than their bodies and they are covered in a waxy, protective layer. Leatherjackets are a more sinister pest for professional turf. Adults emerge from pupae in de-

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