

SLUG AND SNAIL CONTROL

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Slugs and snails can be one of the golf course superintendent's most troublesome pests because of the difficulty in obtaining control. Slugs and snails are related to oysters and clams. The full grown slug is about 1-2 inches long. They are one of the first pests in the spring. They can become particularly abundant when dense foliage is close to the ground.

There have been a number of remedies and combinations of ingredients tried to control these pests. For example, bran milled from wheat and mixed with Paris green, wine, vinegar, ethyl alcohol, beer (fresh and stale) and grape juice in combinations with calcium arsenate, metaldehyde, corn cobs, water, etc.

The standard consumer slug baits available to golf course superintendents from your local suppliers is metaldehyde pellets. This successful chemical used in slug and snail control was discovered in Africa by just plain chance. The story goes that a woman who used meta to boil water for tea at a picnic later observed that many slugs were attracted to crumbs of meta-fuel brushed from her car. So the discovery that powdered metaldehyde in bran was toxic to slugs and snails was a chance observation rather than any scientific experiment.

A home gardener in Connecticut who placed shallow containers of beer in her garden as a joke found that the next morning many slugs had crawled into the liquid and drowned. So once again chance, not scientific experimentation, prevailed.

Recently, tests were designed to compare the results of beer and other attractants with metaldehyde and other toxic substances to snails and slugs for control.

Slugs and snails were collected and three tests conducted. The tests were replicated two-six times. In four tests, beer as a standard was highly attractive to the slugs and snails whether it was fresh or had been opened for a few days. Unfermented grape juice also attracted large numbers when it was fresh but lost its effectiveness after a couple of days. Wine, vinegar, and ethyl alcohol were unattractive.

Because slugs and snails prefer to congregate under objects soak your slug bait pellets in beer to make them more palatable and place them underneath small wooden boards strategically placed in areas that are having slug problems. The pests will meet under the boards, eat lunch and hopefully control will be obtained.

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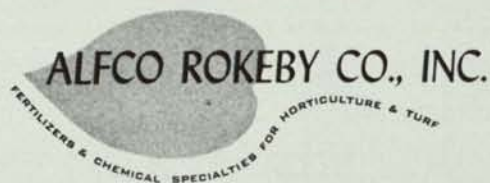
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