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By Stanley Rachesky  
University of Illinois

To check for the presence of chinch bugs and other insects, take an old coffee can, cut both ends off and sink it into the turf about an inch, then add two or three teaspoons of household detergent or one tablespoon of Pyrethrum emulsion to a gallon of water and pour it into the can. Chinch bugs, sod webworms, armyworms, cutworms, etc., will rise to the surface if they are present. If not, all you're out is an old coffee can.

**GROUND PEARLS** — Actually, they're not worth a dime, so don't think you're rich if you find them. They're the immature or nymphal stage of a soil inhabiting scale insect. The nymphs are encysted in hard, globular shells that closely resemble tiny pearls about one eighth of an inch in diameter. The young nymphs feed on the fine, little grass rootlets by sucking out the plant juices (sounds like a vampire insect — da-a-ahling). When ground pearl infestations are heavy the grass turns brown and dies in irregular spots. Good maintenance practices, especially fertilization and irrigation help to minimize ground pearl damage.

**ANTS** — Ants are probably the worlds number one pest. They're found almost everywhere. Most of the ant species, especially those classified as turf headaches, build their nests in the ground forming little hills near the nest openings. The ant hills and small mounds are ugly and very often smother the surrounding grass. Ants have the capabilities of damaging grass roots by nesting in and about them and by also destroying the seed in the ground, thus preventing a good stand of grass.

**MOLE CRICKETS** — Shovel-like feet and stout forelegs give this burrowing little insect its very apropos name. Mole crickets love to chomp into the roots of grass. Their presence in the turf is also felt by their uprooting of the grass plant itself causing the soil to quickly dry out. One little mole cricket can run havoc through a square yard of turf in a single night.

**slugs and snails** — These can be one of the most troublesome pests you may encounter 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 homeowners from your local garden center are 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 to 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 it's effectiveness after a couple of days. Wine, vinegar, and ethyl alcohol were unattractive.

**MILLIPEDES AND CENTIPEDES** — These little creatures are not insects, but are worm-like, little animals with many body segments and legs. The difference between the two is that centipedes have one pair of legs (2 legs) per each body segment while millipedes have two pair of legs (4 legs) per each body segment. Both species curl up into a coil when they're disturbed. They usually do not do any damage to lawns as they feed mainly on decaying matter. After a heavy rain they often times congregate in great numbers. Many times one will see them crawling through the grass either in the spring or fall of the year in vast multitudes. For some reason or other, they appear to migrate at that time of the year. If your house happens to be in the migration path, watch out! They crawl into houses, garages, swimming pools, etc.

**SOWBUGS AND PILLBUGS** — These little creatures are not insects either. They closely resemble in appearance an Armadillo. However, one lady once described them as looking exactly like a Volkswagon. A perfect comparison. Sowbugs differ from pillbugs by not being able to coil up into a little ball or pill when disturbed. Both species feed on organic matter in the soil and once in a blue moon, on grass and other plants. They have been known to run amuck in green houses, however, they seldom cause injury to turf. They mainly are a nuisance pest in and around the yard and are occasionally found migrating into your house.

**CLOVER MITES** — Very tiny, tiny animals about the size of the head of a pin. They feed on a clover, grasses, shrubs and a variety of other plants, but do not usually cause damage. They may occur in tremendous numbers. Actually, they're the greatest problem when they enter buildings in the fall or early spring. **Control** - Apply dicofol (Kelthane) as a broadcast spray over the turf areas adjacent to the building.

**LEAFHOPPERS** — Just as their name implies, they take short flights or "hops" from plant to plant. Leafhoppers are about one fourth of an inch long and can be either mottled or speckled green-yellow or brownish-gray in color.

Leafhoppers are plant sucking insects. They enjoy sucking the life out of the leaves and stems of grass or shrubs. Sometimes, feeding is so intense and populations so large that entire lawns must be reseeded. Characteristic of leafhopper damage to established lawns is the appearance of whitened patches. Leafhopper damage must be carefully diagnosed, for its damage is often mistaken due to dry weather or disease.

**EARTHWORMS** — A few species of earthworms can cause turf damage by throwing up substantial amounts of soil resulting in the smothering of the grass. Basically, earthworms are beneficial by aerating heavy soils. The presence of earthworms is easily distinguished at night after a rain or noting the presence of small holes in the turf surrounded by pellets. **Control** - No control recommended.



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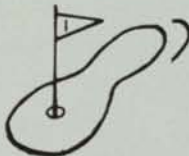
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