

Red Thread A Disease on the Increase

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Dr. Jackson's update of the red thread disease situation featured the following points.

—Five years ago we thought we knew all there was to know about red thread. Not so!

—Turf of low vigor (similar to dollar spot) is susceptible, especially fine fescues (red fescues more than Chewings (fescues) and perennial ryegrasses. Bermudagrass is susceptible to pink patch too. Ryegrass cultivars differ in susceptibility.

—Recent evidence indicates that more than one fungus is involved. Corticium has been studied in detail, but there are at least two fungi involved — one causes red thread and one causes pink patch. The two diseases are similar and easily confused, one for the other. Often a disease complex — red thread/pink patch — are considered as one disease.

—Infection starts usually at leaf tips as small spots develop. These spread down the leaf. Fungi have pink mycelia that are easy to see. Cool, wet weather favors the development of the fungus. Compact masses of fungi produce a resting stage which gets darker red as it dries and becomes hard and brittle. Also, little cushions of mycelia are produced. There is a fruiting stage that produces two to four spores. These germinate to produce more mycelia. Turf grown under low fertility is more prone to infection but even vigorously growing turf can become infected. At times the fungus may act like snow mold under snow cover in the winter.

—The fungus may work on living tissue as a parasite or on dead tissue as a saprophyte. Some symptoms differ; patches may not produce dark red thread-like mycelia. More than one fungus may be working together at the same time under some conditions. The fungus glues or mats the leaves together so the pink appearance is more conspicuous.

—Pink patch fruits with only two spores. Mycelium is clamped and fluffs out in culture. Red thread produces less mycelia in culture and has a simple septa that is not clamped.

—Control of the two fungi with chemicals varies —

- cadmium good for both;
- daconil good for red thread;
- benomyl good for pink patch;
- bayleton good for both;
- chipco 26019 good for both.

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