

Clark Talks Turf

■ TIMELY TURF ADVICE



→ Tomaso-Peterson Helps in the Fight Against Spring Dead Spot

Maria Tomaso-Peterson is an associate professor of turfgrass pathology at Mississippi State University and has spent a good portion of her time investigating spring dead spot in bermudagrass. Tomaso-Peterson shares her insights and experience on coping with spring dead spot.

Q How far are you progressing in being able to predict outbreaks of spring dead spot? Not very far. Spring dead spot remains unpredictable despite our best efforts and those of other turfgrass pathologists. The disease is inconsistent from year-to-year from one golf course to another.



Q Where on the golf course is spring dead spot most common? Superintendents tell me that spring dead spot is most common on fairways.

Q Any ideas on why that is? My theory is that Rubigan (fenarimol) applied as a preemergence to control annual bluegrass on putting greens is suppressing spring dead spot as well. Therefore, superintendents see less spring dead spot on greens since they

don't usually apply Rubigan as a pre-emergence on fairways. Some superintendents have switched to sulfonylurea herbicides to control annual bluegrass on greens and a few report having more spring dead spot after the switch.

Q What steps can a superintendent take on a preventive basis to reduce spring dead spot in fairways? Start with development of a long-term management strategy to reduce spring dead spot. The strategy needs to be carried out consistently year after year to be successful.

A few practices to consider:

- If possible, establish a cold tolerant bermudagrass cultivar. Research and experience have shown that cold tolerant bermudagrass cultivars are more resistant to spring dead spot.

- Recent research from North Carolina State University conducted by Lane Tredway, Ph.D., indicates non-acidifying fertilizers such as calcium nitrate help reduce spring dead spot.

- In mid-June or thereabouts, when the bermudagrass is growing well, implement deep vertical mowing. The deep vertical mowing will stimulate new root growth. Remove and discard the debris so you are not spreading infected plant parts around.

Q If a superintendent has spring dead spot on fairways today, what do you recommend for cultural control/recovery? Patience, to start with. As it warms up the bermudagrass will re-

cover but it takes time. Also consider the following:

- Explore using non-DNA preemergence herbicides. Experience has shown that DNA preemergence herbicides delay the pegging down of new stolons in spring dead spot damaged areas.

- Fertilize using the rates you usually apply at the recommended date for your location.

- Some superintendents spread green sand over the damaged areas to mask spring dead spot damage. This doesn't enhance recovery, but it improves appearance.

Q What fungicide treatment strategies do you recommend for spring dead spot control in the spring? Our research has shown that fungicide applications in the fall compared to applications in spring perform about equally. I recommend making fungicide applications in spring. You can see areas where spring dead spot is active and only treat areas that need treatment. This saves time and money.

In spring, treat when the soil temperature within the root zone at a 2- to 3-inch depth reaches 60° F or above.

Use a fungicide labeled for spring dead spot control. Many provide good control. More important than the fungicide that you select is making sure it is applied properly. Apply in a high volume of water (2 to 4 gallons per 1,000 sq. ft.), water the fungicide in immediately after application and if possible, apply the fungicide when the leaves are covered with dew. This will help move the fungicide into the root zone.

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