

I think the benefit of most biological treatments for dollar spot control remains questionable. However, most research with mineral oil applications shows a reduction in dollar spot severity compared to untreated turf and suggests that control with conventional fungicides can be improved by including the mineral oil in a tank mix.

Some turf scientists have rediscovered the fungistatic nature of two plant growth regulators (PGR), flurprimidol (Cutless) and paclobutrazol (Trimmit). These compounds are related to DMI fungicides and will reduce disease severity. However, because of their chemical similarity to DMI compounds, they are likely to accelerate the rate at which pathogen populations evolve towards resistance to registered DMI fungicides. Fungicide resistance within dollar spot pathogen populations should be a consideration in any program that involves these two PGR compounds.

Because of the season-long dollar spot threat, most effective approaches involve repeated application of fungicides at regular intervals. Higher rates and shorter intervals will result in a reduced risk of serious dollar spot outbreaks. One of the more contemporary issues with regard to dollar spot control involves the timing of the initial application. There is the notion that early, first or second mowing applications of a certain fungicide will limit dollar spot development for months afterward.

Any explanation must be based on logic and the biology of the dollar spot pathogen rather than unsupported supposition. Given the nature of apical growth in fungi, the pathogen must be active (growing) for the fungicide to be effective. If environmental conditions favor pathogen growth and an effective compound is applied at that time, the fungus will acquire the fungicide. Once inside the mycelial threads, the fungicide disturbs cellular functions stopping pathogen growth, allows turf to recover and effectively controls the potential outbreak. For any geographic location, historical temperature averages define the dollar spot "window." In most cases, the initial fungicide application scheduled at the beginning of the window is most effective.

So here we are at the beginning of the 2014 season, poised to do battle with this simple but stubborn pathogen. Our approach must be based on a sound disease control strategy that includes reducing disease pressure through implementation of sound cultural practices, understanding efficacy and limitation of fungicides registered for use against dollar spot, anticipating the initial outbreak and following a preventative rather than curative approach and positioning your dollar spot sprays with consideration of other diseases that threaten as the season progresses.

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