

Urban Legends of Turfgrass Pathology

By Jeff Gregos, TDL, Department of Plant Pathology, University of Wisconsin-Madison



Over the past couple of years I have followed many discussions on Noer-Net, several of which I believe to be urban legends of the turfgrass pathology world. In this article I hope to shed some light on some of these myths and help you with your disease and fungicide questions.

Strobilurins and Dollar Spot

It has been rumored by some researchers from outside of our state that products such as Heritage will actually enhance dollar spot, sometimes as much as 1000 times.

This is not only a myth but also extremely misleading. Results from researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have continually shown that Heritage and other strobilurins do not enhance dollar spot. In fact, research I was involved with at Penn State showed that Heritage is effective against dollar spot at higher than labeled rates, but since this was

not economical it was excluded from the label. Additionally, I have evaluated several strobilurins that have excellent efficacy against dollar spot. As for Heritage and Compass, below is a dollar spot rating from the 2000 Anthracnose trial where Heritage did not have more dollar spot damage than the check, and Compass had significantly less damage.

Red Leaf Spot in the Spring

Last year there was a debate on Noer-Net about a spring leaf spot on bentgrass, which was called red leaf spot.

This problem was examined at several courses throughout Wisconsin last spring and red leaf spot was not found to be the disease. Red leaf spot is a hot weather disease and would be active in similar weather as brown patch. What was found to be the actual problem was take-all patch. So that leads to another urban legend in which take-all patch is only a dis-

ease of young bentgrass stands. It has been found that take-all patch can cause damage on older stands of bentgrass but not to the extent of young stands. Symptoms usually appear as reddish patches several inches to over a foot wide and generally do not die-out completely. Research at UW-Madison has shown that control of take-all patch requires fall application of fungicides and irrigation management throughout the season.

Pythium in the Spring

Over the past couple of years one spring disease has been confused as pythium blight.

While there are pythium species that can be active during cool-weather, they tend to be root pathogens and do not result in foliar blighting. What has been found to be the culprit is *Microdochium nivale*, the causal agent of *Microdochium* patch or pink snow mold. Because of the high number of spores that this pathogen produces, *Microdochium* patch can be transferred by mowing or water, which can result in a streaking appearance similar to pythium blight damage. Another important fact to know about this disease is that it can be active in just about every month of the year. The TDL lab has received samples of this disease in every month, and it can be active well into the summer or early in the fall. *Microdochium* patch can be active during nights when the air temperature is below 55°F and is prevalent in shaded areas.

So when you are making decisions on what your disease is or what disease that fungicide can enhance, please consult research results that apply to you. 🌿

