

Cold and Wet: What Does This Mean For Insects This Year?

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Oh how different this spring is compared to last year! Comparatively, from a growing degree-day perspective (heat units), as of May 1 we are an estimated 2-3 weeks behind this year. To this end, insects are cold-blooded animals that are dependent on temperature for biological activity, most insects are inactive at temperatures below 50 F. So what impact will this have on insects this year?

The answer to this question is not so easy, thus only a speculative guess would be in order. Nature often tends or finds ways to make-up or catch-up to get things back to some degree of normalcy. However, in theory, if weather

conditions continue to remain cool and wet, we can anticipate a delay in the development of insect pests and subsequent damage. For example, Japanese beetle adults typically begin to emerge in mid- to late-June with peak adult emergence in early July. If our current weather pattern continues and we do not develop typically heat-unit accumulation, the emergence of Japanese beetle adults will likely be delayed several weeks. Consequently, the occurrence of white grubs and subsequent turfgrass damage will also be delayed by several weeks.

So, what does this mean for your management approach

or strategy for managing insect pests such as the Japanese beetle? The ideal IPM strategy would be to closely monitor adult emergence by either using pheromone traps or merely observing preferred hosts of Japanese beetle adults such as linden, birch, maple, etc. Once Japanese beetles adults are captured in traps or observed on plants, respective preventative grub insecticide treatments can be applied. Make certain to appropriately water grub insecticide treatments into the turf with an adequate amount of water (about 0.10-0.20 inches) immediately following insecticide application.

Should you choose to make a curative or corrective grub control application over the preventative approach, understand that smaller grubs (younger) are much easier to control than larger (older). Since most curative or rescue grub insecticides are relatively short-residual products (< 15 days) and the grub are delayed as a result of the cool conditions, be sure to closely inspect the turf for the presence of young larvae to ensure maximum control.

The bottom line regarding the impact of a cool and wet spring is that it can be quite difficult to predict how it will ultimately affect insect pest populations and subsequent damage. Again, be sure to regularly monitor and sample for respective insect pests to accurately determine the appropriate management or strategy timing to ensure the greatest likelihood of success.



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