

NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL UPDATE

I Wish I Had a Dollar For Every Spot...

By **BOB VAVREK**
USGA Agronomist

Dollar spot has been extremely difficult to control at many golf courses across the North Central Region. The weather has been ideal for disease activity, temperatures in the 80's with plenty of rain and humidity. Golf courses with modest operating budgets that rarely treat fairways for disease have suffered the most damage. Treatments that normally protect fairway turf for two to three weeks have only controlled the disease for a week or less depending on the weather conditions.

Some superintendents have been disappointed with the effectiveness of old reliable, contact fungicides such as chlorothalonil. The frequent thunderstorms have encouraged vigorous fairway growth. It should come as no surprise that contact fungicides last no more than a week when a fair amount of the material is removed along with the abundant clippings harvested by frequent mowing operations. A tank mix of contact and systemic fungicides are providing longer lasting control than a single material, but perfect turf comes at a high price when treating 25 or 30 acres.

Cultural practices, such as removing dew early in the morning on days when the fairways are not mowed and managing the nitrogen fertility more carefully to maintain a steady growth rate have been worth the extra effort in some cases.

Remember the classic disease triangle. When you have (1) the pathogen, (2) ideal weather conditions, and (3) a susceptible turfgrass – you will lose some turf density, in spite of fungicide treatments. A number of superintendents are second-guessing the fungicides or their management practices, when in fact, some disease is going to occur until the weather breaks.

The funny thing is I have not heard one golfer or Green Committee Chairman complain about dollar spot in fairways this summer, even at golf courses where the disease is running rampant. Why strive to provide perfect turf if the golfers don't seem to mind imperfect turf? Just some food for thought during the dog days of summer.

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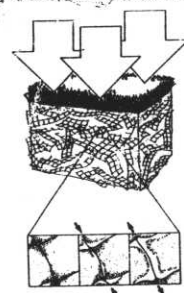
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