

DEALING WITH INSECTS ON NORTHERN HOME LAWNS¹

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Generally, the approaches to insect control on home lawns can be broken down into programs that are preventive, predictive, or curative. Preventive programs utilize insecticides to insure that insect problems do not occur. Predictive programs examine circumstances, conditions and other factors in an effort to anticipate the probability of insect infestations as a basis for whether to include an insecticide in the program or not. The curative approach implies waiting until the insect(s) are actually present in damaging numbers and/or symptoms of damage are apparent before an insecticide is used.

Key among the factors involved in deciding the kind of insect control program a lawn service company will employ are: market area, economics, and knowledge. There is great diversity in insect problems among market areas. Even within a market area such as a city, problems on one side can differ markedly from those on another. In addition, variations in moisture, soil type, age of home sites, and previous history of pesticide usage are also known to vary markedly from one area of a city to another. These factors may have great bearing on the incidence of insect problems.

Economics is, of course, the base factor for the lawn service business; the main objective of which is earning a profit. With the cost of insecticides, labor and equipment being as high as they were in 1982, difficult decisions must be made in selecting the program to be used.

A factor perhaps equally basic to the approach used to deal with insects in a lawn care programs is knowledge of the pests. History of pest problem occurrence in the market area, insecticide characteristics and pest life cycles are essential. Knowledge of this kind can be obtained in many different ways. Among them is information from competitors who have had extensive experience with pests in the market area. In most cases this information is shared or learned easily by just paying attention at the proper time.

Training programs are essential to providing the necessary technical information operators need in their daily contact with customers. Their educational programs should be presented at a level they understand and include seminars, slide sets, example specimens and some field trips to reinforce classroom work. Attendance at turf conferences is another source of up-dated valuable information. Should a problem arise which simply cannot be handled, bringing in or contacting a consultant can be a quick way to the solution.

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The source of knowledge which should be available to all employees throughout the year is a reference library. This library should contain current issues of trade publications, books and field guides (there are some good ones available) and extension publications from universities and the chemical industry. Today slide sets on insects and their identification are now available from a number of sources. Such sets are valuable for winter training programs but should be made available any time. As a supplement, start making your own reference insect collection.

My ranking of insect problems on northern home lawns, according to the degree to which they cause damage to home lawn turf in the North Central States area is as follows: 1) chinchbug, 2) bluegrass billbug, 3) grubs, 4) sod webworm and cutworm, 5) greenbug, 6) wintergrain mite. Damage from these insect pests occurs in varying degrees throughout the north. Combinations of infestations, ranging from one to two or more insects, often occur. Below are the insects and some insecticides and programs used by the lawn care industry for control of various pest combinations.

SOME INSECT CONTROL PROGRAMS FOR THE LAWN CARE INDUSTRY²

GRUBS

PREVENTION PROGRAM

APRIL-MAY-JUNE-JULY

- OFTANOL 2 lb AI/acre
- MILKY disease (Japanese Beetle ONLY)

AUGUST

- OFTANOL 2 lb AI/acre
- PROXOL 8 lb AI/acre
- TURCAM 2 lb AI/acre
- Diazinon 5-6 lb AI/acre

SEPTEMBER

- PROXOL 8 lb AI/acre
- TURCAM 2 lb AI/acre
- Diazinon 5-6 lb AI/acre

CHINCHBUG + BILLBUG + GRUBS

PREVENTION PROGRAM

- OFTANOL 2 lb AI/acre - (early April - early May)

CURATIVE PROGRAM

- Many effective insecticides

CHINCHBUG AND/OR BILLBUG

PREVENTION PROGRAM

LATE MARCH - EARLY MAY

- DURSBAN 1 lb AI/acre
- Diazinon 2.5 lb AI/acre

CURATIVE PROGRAM

- CURATIVE PROGRAMS

² No endorsement of named products by the author is intended nor is criticism implied for products not mentioned.

SOD WEBWORM AND/OR CUTWORM

CURATIVE PROGRAM

- Many effective insecticides
- DO NOT water in

GREENBUG

PREVENTION PROGRAM

- None

CURATIVE PROGRAM

- ORTHENE 1 lb AI/acre
- DO NOT water in or mow for 48 hrs.

WINTER GRAIN MITE

CURATIVE PROGRAM

- DURSBAN 1 lb AI/acre
- Diazinon 2.5 lb AI/acre