

TURFGRASS TRENDS

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ENTOMOLOGY

Black Turfgrass Ataenius Small Pest of Increasing Importance on Highly Managed Turfgrass

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Ataenius spretulus, otherwise known as the black turfgrass ataenius (BTA), is a scarab beetle native to North America. It was first reported damaging golf course turf in Minnesota in 1932. It was identified next in New York state in 1969, then in Ohio in 1973. Prior to the 1970s, this insect was considered only an incidental pest but, in the last 25 years, this insect has caused damage on golf courses throughout the Northeastern and Midwestern portions of the United States, as well as in California and Ontario, Canada. It has now been reported in 41 of the 48 contiguous states, though most of the severe damage appears in the Midwestern regions of the U.S.

The BTA can be easily confused with another, relatively new turfgrass pest, *Aphodius granarius*, which is also commonly found in areas where BTA is a continuous problem. Although BTA and the aphodius beetle are quite similar, they can be differentiated by the



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