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Bentgrass Dead Spot: A New Disease Incited by *Ophiosphaerella agrostis*

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In late summer of 1998, a new fungal disease of relatively young creeping bentgrass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) putting greens in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio was discovered. The causal agent was reported to be an undescribed species of *Ophiosphaerella* (Dernoeden et al., 1999). An isolate obtained from a bentgrass nursery with similar disease symptoms was obtained from Dr. Randy Kane of the University of Illinois. The Illinois isolate also was confirmed to be the same undescribed species of *Ophiosphaerella*. The disease since has been found in Georgia, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, and North and

South Carolina. In 1999, we confirmed the disease in Texas in a "Champion" bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon* x *C. transvaalensis*) research green at Texas A&M University. Hence, **the disease has been found in eleven states and has probably gone misdiagnosed in many other areas of the country.**

There are about seven other known species of *Ophiosphaerella*, and three have been reported to be turfgrass pathogens. *Ophiosphaerella herpotricha*, *O. korrae* (syn. *Leptosphaeria korrae*) and *O. narmari* (syn. *L. narmari*) are causal agents of spring dead spot of bermudagrass (*Cynodon* spp.). *Ophiosphaerella herpotricha* also incites spring dead spot of American buffalograss (*Buchloe dactyloides*), while *O. korrae* is the causal agent of necrotic ring spot in creeping red fescue (*Festuca rubra* var. *rubra*), Kentucky (*Poa pratensis*), and annual (*Poa annua*) bluegrasses. All of the aforementioned *Ophiosphaerella* species are turfgrass root pathogens. A unifying characteristic of these turfgrass pathogens is that they produce darkly pigmented hyphae on roots, but none of these pathogens has been associated with creeping bentgrass (Clarke and Gould, 1993; Wetzel et al., 1996). A study of colony characteristics, spores and fruiting bodies was made from a collection of isolates from eight of the affected clubs. This morphological data and information, when compared to published descriptions, indicated that the new pathogen may be an unknown species of *Ophiosphaerella*. **Through DNA testing, the fungus was shown to be an undescribed species of *Ophiosphaerella*. The pathogen was named *O. agrostis* and the disease will be known as bentgrass dead spot** (Camara et al., 2000).

This new disease of creeping bentgrass first appeared between August and September of 1998 on putting greens in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio. According to Dr. Randy Kane, however, the disease was first noted at the Skokie C.C. in Glencoe, Illinois in the autumn of 1997. In 1999, the first known outbreak of bentgrass dead spot was observed in June at Trenton C.C. in New Jersey, and additional confirmations were forthcoming in July, August and into early autumn. The disease is less common on tees and collars, and thus far has not been found on fairways.

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