

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

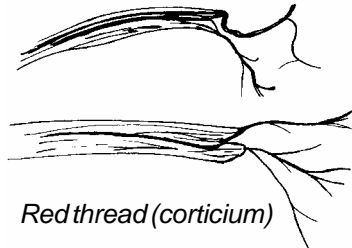
CORNELL

Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



Nassau County
Horticulture Program
Eisenhower Park
East Meadow, NY 11554
516 228-0426

Red Thread Disease of Turfgrass



Red thread (*corticium*)

Red thread is a disease of lawn grasses that occurs in the spring and fall during humid periods when air temperatures are between 60° and 75°F. The disease, also known as “pink patch,” is especially severe on slow-growing nitrogen-deficient turf. It is most severe when phosphorus, potassium, calcium and atmospheric nitrogen are also deficient. Bluegrasses, fescues, ryegrasses and bentgrasses may be affected, but the fine-leaved fescues and some ryegrasses are especially susceptible.

Symptoms

The first noticeable symptoms of red thread disease may be patches of water-soaked leaves and leaf sheaths. Infected grass blades soon die and fade to a bleached tan color when dry. In severe cases the diseased grass looks scorched or yellowed. The patches are irregularly shaped or circular, and from 1" to 12" in diameter. They may be widely scattered or coalesce into larger spots if they're close together.

In humid weather the fungus grows visibly on the infected grass blades and leaf sheaths and can be seen as thread-like strands or web-like areas of coral-pink to blood red fungal mycelium. Red thread-like strands on the fungus mycelium protrude up to 1/2" from the tips of infected blades and are easily seen; hence the name “red thread disease.”

Disease cycle

The fungus does not produce spores for dispersal as do many other disease-causing fungi. The spread of infected tissue and bits of the “red threads” to healthy areas of grass depends upon mowing and other activities that occur on the diseased areas. The fungus mycelium in infected plant material and the dried pieces of fragmented “red threads” remain dormant whenever the disease is not active, as in the winter.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide* that is

least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. *insecticide*, *fungicide*, *herbicide*, etc.

Cultural Control

Avoid nitrogen deficiency, especially in perennial ryegrass and fescue. Whenever possible, use resistant varieties. Some Kentucky bluegrass varieties that have shown resistance to red thread are: Challenger, Eclipse, Merit, Princeton. Fine fescues are Biljart, Reliant, Scaldis, Waldina. The actual fertilization rates for your lawn will depend upon the type of grasses you have and the specific rates recommended in your area. The use of some organic fertilizers will reduce disease severity. Where red thread has been a problem in the past, apply lime, if necessary, to maintain a soil pH of 6.5 to 7.0.

Avoid overwatering, especially frequent sprinkling in the late afternoon or evening. Provide good soil drainage to prevent the slow drying of areas in the lawn. Some organic fertilizers will reduce disease severity.

Plant trees and shrubs far enough apart so that large areas of grass do not remain shaded for long periods during the day and dew and other moisture on the grass will readily evaporate. Prevention of thatch accumulations is often helpful in reducing the severity of red thread disease.

Chemical Control

Where the disease is severe, fungicidal control may be necessary. Chemical pesticides are available. If you choose to use chemical pesticides, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations.

Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities C-2-25 MTC:re revised TTY 3/01