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Fusarium Blight (Necrotic Ring Spot)



DESCRIPTION OF THE DISEASE

Fusarium blight first appears as small, circular, grayish green areas, ranging from a few inches up to a foot in diameter. Some plants in the center of the circles may survive, giving them a frog eye or donut appearance.

The crown of the dead stems is affected with a reddish rot and is hard and tough. At times, a pink layer of the fungus can be seen near the soil line. The dead foliage appears bleached. The fungus survives as mycelia in plant debris and plants killed by previous infections, or as thick walled resting spores (chlamydospores) in the thatch and soil. Fusarium blight occurs most commonly in areas that have been stressed for moisture and in areas in full sun.



SUSCEPTIBLE TURFGRASSES

Fusarium blight can affect a number of cool-season grasses grown in warm weather conditions including bentgrasses, red fescue, tall fescue, perennial ryegrass and centipede grass, but is most severe on Kentucky bluegrass.

CONDITIONS FAVORING DISEASE

The disease is favored by daytime temperatures of 85° to 95°F and night temperatures of 70°F or above.

MANAGEMENT

Part of the problem is that control with fungicides is very difficult. So, before we pull out the expensive heavy artillery, its best to tackle Fusarium Blight with good cultural practices first, and save chemical control materials as a final resort.

- Michigan State University recommends watering 1/10 of an inch of water per day, and watering in early afternoon to lower soil temperatures.
- Keep mowing height very high during periods of disease activity (3 or 3 1/2" on bluegrass), mowing lower can stress the plants and predispose them to this syndrome.
- Keep thatch levels below 1/2" by aerating twice a year to promote deeper rooting of the turf.
- Keep fertility levels high with regular applications of slow-release fertilizer.