



DISEASE INFORMATION SHEET

Pythium Blight (*Pythium aphanidermatum*)

Pythium blight, also known as grease spot and cottony blight, can be a highly destructive turfgrass disease, especially on bentgrasses and ryegrasses. Severe outbreaks can **completely destroy** the lawn within a few days if weather conditions favor disease development.

Symptoms and Signs

Pythium blight first appears as small, irregularly shaped spots ranging from 1/2 to 4 inches in diameter. Leaves appear water-soaked in appearance at first, then shriveled. Diseased patches fade to a light brown or gray color. Groups of spots frequently join together. At times, the shape of the affected areas may resemble elongated streaks. Both the presence and pattern of these streaks seem to be determined by the flow or presence of surface water. With high humidity in early morning or throughout the day, diseased leaves may be covered with the white, cobwebby, mold like growth of the causal fungus.



Disease Cycle

Pythium fungi may survive for long periods in the soil. In turf with a past history of Pythium blight, infected plant debris from the previous season or fungus spores in the soil are sources of infection. Under conditions favorable for disease development, Pythium blight can spread very rapidly. Primarily a warm, wet weather disease, turf blighting and disease development will be most rapid and severe at air temperatures from 85° to 95° F. As the air temperature approaches 95° F, destruction of grass stands can occur in a very short time. Pythium blight develops more rapidly when nitrogen levels are high, and more slowly under moderate or low nitrogen fertilizer programs.

Cultural Control

In problem areas, satisfactory plant growth maintained through moderate fertilizer applications provides the least risk of Pythium blight damage. Kentucky bluegrass, the fine fescues, and tall fescue are less susceptible to Pythium blight than perennial ryegrass and bentgrasses. Thorough Fall aeration and seeding with Kentucky Bluegrass is the best long-term prevention for Pythium.

Chemical Control

Preventative applications of specific fungicides can provide short term (about 2 weeks) protection. The cost of these applications however, makes their use prohibitive on all grasses except for very high value turf, such as golf greens.