Turfgrass Disease Profiles

Slime Molds

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Slime molds can occur on any species of turfgrass but are most common in taller mown turf. Despite their threatening appearance, slime molds are not infectious and will not result in anything more than temporary cosmetic damage.

Several species of primitive fungi that can grow and multiply on plant surfaces cause slime molds. Outbreaks are normally brief, lasting 1 – 2 weeks, and coincide with wet weather and high levels of organic matter. Initial signs of slime mold include colorful, well-defined patches on turf (Figures 1 and 2). Colors may range from yellow and orange to purple and gray. The mold actually represents masses of spores produced by the fungi (Figure 3). These spores may be dispersed by rain and/or maintenance practices. The bright colored mold usually appears for only a few days before it turns gray or black (Figure 4). Usually, by the time the color changes, the wet mold begins to turn dry and powdery.

Because slime molds are not infectious, and remain for only short periods of time, no lasting harm to turf will occur. No fungicides are necessary for control. Affected areas can be hosed with water to wash the fungus from plant surfaces. Also, raking will break up the mold (especially during dry weather) and hasten its disappearance and the return to a more attractive turf stand.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

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