

Caterpillars In Turf

We are seeing damage from caterpillars in lawns at this time. A few of our culprits are both sod webworms and armyworms. Armyworms include fall armyworm and yellow-striped armyworms. The worm is actually a moth commonly referred to as 'lawn moths.' Moths are insects that have a complete lifecycle. This means they start as an egg, hatch as a caterpillar (larvae), then pupate (pupa) into adult moths. They over winter as caterpillars and resume feeding in the spring. Next, they pupate into adults. The adult moths lay eggs and hatch into caterpillars which feed again in late July and August.

A key diagnostic feature of caterpillar damage is noted by chewing marks on the grass blades. These thin, dead areas of turf also resemble drought stress and disease. When you see this evidence, mix 2 gallons of tap water with a few tablespoons of dishwashing detergent. Sprinkle this solution over one square yard on the margin of the affected turf. The soap will disturb the worms making them rise to the surface.

Add 1/2 cup of dishwashing detergent to the solution. This is because the detergent carries many microbial bacteria and fungus that quickly breaks down the body of the insects.

Information from this article was taken from "Sod Webworms in Home Lawns" through Penn State Extension and the Georgia Pest Management Handbook.