



SOD WEBWORMS

The **Tropical Sod Webworm**, *Herpetogramma phaeopterali*, is the most common caterpillar attacking turfgrass. They attack all grasses, but seem to prefer Crabgrass and St. Augustinegrass to Bahiagrass when feeding on our Central Florida residential lawns. Sod webworms are usually not a problem in the Orlando area of Central Florida until June and have peak feeding periods in July and August. Their damage decreases in the fall and ends once cold weather arrives. Injured grass has notches chewed along the sides of the blades or is eaten back unevenly. They feed only at night and rest in a curled position near green fecal matter on the soil surface during the day. The life cycle requires five to six weeks and there are several generations per year.

Identification

Probably the first thing you will notice when Sod Webworms have arrived is that it seems someone has entered your lawn while you were sleeping and scalped it in areas with a weed eater. It is not uncommon to go to bed at night with the lawn in good condition only to wake up to patches of the lawn missing grass blades in the morning. You may also have noticed several weeks earlier that there were some small brown moths flying through the shady areas of your grass or emerging from your shrubs.



Sod Webworm Adult Moth

The larvae and the adult moths are the most noticeable stages of this pest. The larvae are the only stage that causes damage. They are 3/4" long when mature and have translucent bodies that appear greenish from a diet of green grass blades. The moths have brown colored wings and measure about 3/4" long.



Sod Webworm Larvae

Sod Webworm Control

Sod Webworms usually cause only temporary cosmetic damage to our turfgrasses and do not by themselves cause any permanent damage. Turfgrass can receive permanent drought damage in the hot summer months if the grass does not receive adequate moisture during the time of Sod Webworm feeding. This type of damage would also occur if the grass were cut too short during a hot, dry period. Sod webworm damage cannot be prevented. However Sod Webworms are easy to control with the proper application of many available insecticides once the worms begin feeding and the damage usually is not noticeable following a couple of weeks of growth after treatment.

The larval stage of the insect is the only stage that can be controlled and there must be larvae feeding before an insecticide can be applied. The presence of moths doesn't necessarily indicate that there is worm damage or that there will be worm damage. Many times the moths in someone's lawn will lay eggs in a neighbor's lawn or the eggs won't develop into worms. One of the benefits of being a Dr. Jack's customer is that if you receive Sod Webworm damage between one of our regularly scheduled services, we will return and treat at no extra charge. **Simply give us a call!**

“We Have Service Down To A Science”

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