

MANAGEMENT OF INSECTS IN LAWNS AND OTHER NON-COMMERCIAL TURFGRASS

Donald E. Short, James A. Reinert and Harvey L. Cromroy*

Several insects and related pests are common in lawns in Florida. Southern chinch bugs, spittlebugs, grass scales and bermudagrass mites suck plant juices. Mole crickets, white grubs, and billbugs live in the soil and damage the grass roots. Others including sod webworms, grass loopers, and armyworms, eat the grass leaves. To these groups can be added insects and related pests such as fleas, earwigs, millipedes, chiggers, sowbugs, and snails that do not damage the lawn but may become nuisances because of their biting people or crawling into houses, garages, or swimming pools.

One group of insects often confused with these pests is actually beneficial. This group includes big-eyed bugs, anthocorids, and nabids that resemble chinch bugs but actually feed on chinch bugs' eggs and nymphs. The *Labidura* earwig, ground beetles, and spiders search through the grass and feed on chinch bugs, webworms, and several other lawn pests. The presence of these beneficial organisms will often prevent the insect pests from reaching damaging levels. It is necessary that a small population of pests be present to maintain these beneficial organisms. Preventative treatments (pesticide applications every 4-8 weeks) may reduce these beneficial organisms and actually contribute to a persistent chinch bug, sod webworm or other pest problem. Apply pesticides only when damage is apparent.

Studies throughout Florida the past several years have demonstrated that the need for pesticide applications to control chinch bugs, sod webworms, and armyworms can be drastically reduced by following certain management practices.

Monitoring

Inspect the lawn weekly during the spring, summer and fall months and biweekly during the winter months, as outlined in the sections of this publication relating to the various pests to determine if damage is beginning to occur and if insects are the problem.

*Extension Entomologist, Professor of Entomology and Extension Acarologist, respectively.