Pythium Blight in Warm-Season Turf

Overview

Pythium blight typically attacks warm-season grasses in the fall, winter, and spring when the turf is growing slowly and more susceptible to infection. Frequent outbreaks occur during periods of cool, cloudy, and wet weather with daytime temperatures below 60°F and turf under stress. Ultradwarf bermudagrasses tend to be more susceptible to cool-weather Pythium blight.

Symptoms

- Pythium blight attacks the foliage and crowns of turfgrass plants.
- Affected turf may appear as irregular water soaked spots or patches eventually resulting in thinned areas (Figure 1).
- On bermudagrass greens, symptoms are often mistaken for leaf spot since both diseases appear under the same environmental conditions.
- Turf managers should send sample(s) of infected turf to a university lab for accurate diagnosis.

Figure 1. Pythium blight symptoms on an ultradwarf bermudagrass green. Photo credit: Rob Golembiewski, Atticus.

Cultural Management Strategies

- Pythium blight needs high humidity and/or extended leaf wetness to develop, so cultural practices should focus on moisture management.
- Improve water penetration with regular aerification and/or frequent topdressing throughout the year.
- Use moisture meters to determine water amounts needed and hand water to avoid overwatering.
- Prune trees and shrubs to increase airflow and help the turf canopy dry faster.
- Dew whip or use light weight rolling to disrupt length of leaf wetness period.

Fungicide Solutions

- Cyazofamid, the active ingredient in Celoxid™ SC, is the industry standard when it comes to Pythium control.
- Apply Celoxid SC at 0.45-0.9 fl oz/1,000 sq ft every 14-21 days as needed based on environmental conditions.
- Other Pythium specialist products like Stergo™ MX or Stergo™ G, containing mefenoxam, may be used in rotation with Celoxid SC for resistance management.