

Necrotic Ring Spot Recommendations for Master Gardeners

University of Idaho
Extension
Kootenai County

1250 W Ironwood, Ste 107
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

Phone: (208) 292-2525
Plant Clinic: (208) 292-1377
E-mail: kootenaimg@uidaho.edu
Web: uidaho.edu/kootenai



IDAHO
MASTER
GARDENER
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO
EXTENSION PROGRAM

Prepared by Dorothy Kienke, Previous Master Gardener Coordinator

Necrotic ring spot, is most commonly seen on 2-5 year old Kentucky bluegrass lawns established from sod, but also appears on seeded bluegrass turf. Immunox and Rubigan are chemical controls available to the homeowner, but can be expensive while providing only a 'band aid' solution to the problem. The key to long lasting results is improved soil health. This can be accomplished in several ways.

The problem may stem from poor soil preparation when the lawn was originally installed. In new dwellings the topsoil is frequently hauled away or buried by the contractor and the soil may be compacted from heavy equipment. If new topsoil is brought in it must be incorporated into the parent soil before installing a new lawn to provide for better drainage. If this is not done horizons may exist between the two soil profiles, creating a perched water table. Improve drainage in an existing lawn by core aerating twice a year (spring and fall) for several consecutive years. Once per year thereafter may be all that is necessary.

Plants will utilize either chemical or organic fertilizers effectively, but repeated use of chemical fertilizers can kill the beneficial micro-organisms living in the soil. Using an organic fertilizer such as Turf Royale, Ringer's Restore, fish emulsion, etc. will help restore the beneficial microbial populations that are so vital to soil health. Pro Rich is another organic based fertilizer available to homeowners.

Top dressing with no more than ¼" of compost per growing season and leaving grass clippings on the lawn are other ways of incorporating organic material into existing lawns. EKO, Coeur d' Green, and Whitney Farms are examples of some commercially available organic fertilizers. Since some organic fertilizers are more expensive, some homeowners may opt to use them alternately with chemical products to help defray the cost.

Sound cultural practices are necessary to improve both turf and soil health. A mowing height of 2"- 3" is recommended for bluegrass lawns. Blue grass has a longer sheath than some other types of grass and mowing shorter reduces the leaf surface/ sheath ratio, thus compromising the plants ability to photosynthesize. (Refer to the flyer, Basic Lawn Care, by Dorothy Kienke for more cultural information).

The above information may be combined with the use of fungicides if you chose. Immunox is packaged in homeowner size and has shown promise in the treatment of necrotic ring spot. However, the key to long- term control of Necrotic Ring Spot is proper soil preparation before lawn installation, increasing microbial activity in the soil with regular applications of organic material, combined with sound cultural practices.

Refer to bulletin EB 1734, Managing Necrotic Ring Spot on Turfgrass in the Pacific Northwest, for more information