

Working together toward a healthy sustainable community

Dear Resident,

HRM is educating homeowners on sustainable landscaping and the pesticide by-law. We were passing through your area and noticed evidence of possible chinch bug damage in the neighbourhood. Here are some tips on chinch identification, treatment and prevention.

IDENTIFYING CHINCH

Chinch damage is characterized by rusty-yellow sunken pockets of dead grass which can increase in diameter if not managed. If chinch is suspected, part grasses at perimeter of damaged area and look for tiny, quick moving, brown to reddish/pink beetle-like insects. They consume the crown and stems of the grass and are often found near or above the soil, where the grass meets the earth. For further inspection, remove the top and bottom of a coffee can and push into the ground on the edge of the damaged area. Fill with water. After 15 minutes, drowned insects should float to the surface.



Adult chinch are 4mm and nymphs are smaller.

SUGGESTED CONTROL OPTIONS

Mix 2% dish detergent and water, or, 2 tablespoons of dish soap with water in a spray bottle. Alternatively, a premixed solution of insecticidal soap can be purchased from your lawn care retailer. Saturate affected area as well as half a meter to a meter surrounding the damage in the mornings for 3 to 4 consecutive days. Follow each treatment with a deep watering, respecting any water conservation measures in place.

PREVENTING CHINCH INFESTATION

Dethatch:

- Thatch is the layer of dead grass located on the top of the soil, intertwined within the living grass.
- Thatch is a haven for over-wintering pests such as chinch.
- Remove thatch in the spring and/or fall or when thatch is ½ inch (1 cm) thick.
- Thatch can be removed with a regular lawn rake or a dethatching machine.

Increase mowing height:

- Short grass (less than 3 inches) reduces soil shading, providing optimal habitat for chinch propagation
- Adjust height of mower to 3 inches (7.5 cm)

Water:

- Full sun, sloped terrain, and well-drained areas are often susceptible to dryness and chinch invasion.
- Consider watering susceptible areas once a week when rainfall is less than one inch in 5 to 7 days
- Water in the mornings for an hour or longer. For optimal watering time, measure how long it takes for your sprinkler to fill a pie plate to an inch depth.

Sustainable Landscaping:

- Convert areas that are susceptible to chinch infestations (i.e. sun exposed slopes) to mulched beds, rock gardens and/or flower beds.
- Increase canopy cover by planting trees or shrubs in areas of full sun conditions.

For further resources on sustainable lawn care: www.halifax.ca/pesticides or call 490-4000