



November 14, 2008

## TIPS FOR THE HOME AND ACREAGE OWNER

The weather this November has been such that it is not too late to control perennial weeds like dandelion, clover and creeping charlie (ground ivy) in your yard or acreage. Care should be taken as temperatures drop, to apply systemic herbicides when the ambient temperature is sustained above 50-60 degrees F. for several hours after spraying. This insures movement of the herbicides from the leaves to below ground storage organs such as rhizomes, roots, corms, etc. Do not spray systemic herbicides when the ground is frozen up even if ambient temperatures are elevated.

This fall, Kentucky Bluegrass stem rust has been prevalent especially on old fashioned bluegrass varieties. An obvious symptom is rust colored “powder” (fungal spores) on grass blades, shoes and lawn mower. Heavily infected turf grass may have shown yellowing of grass blades this past September or October. Stem rust typically develops on lawns with slow growth. Fall lawn care, including fertilization and correct irrigation, along with cooler fall weather promotes turf grass growth and rust dissipates.

Stem rust is often a problem on compacted soils; hence core aerification is effective in reducing rust disease. Fungicide controls are rarely suggested for home lawns. However, I recently heard about a new situation for sports turf managers. If stem rust occurs on sports fields, the fungal spores can cause problems for allergy/asthma sufferers. Control of stem rust is recommended on sports turfs using a combination of turf management and timely fungicide applications.

Historically it was recommended to mow turf grass shorter in the fall. An alternative recommendation now is to maintain the same height all season and through winter. This promotes rooting and stress tolerance. Mowing Kentucky bluegrass at 2.5 to 3.0 inches and tall fescue at 3.0 to 3.5 inches all season and leaving it at this height for winter is a good practice to follow. Do not allow grass to go into winter too tall or matting and suffocation may occur; as well as an increased incidence of snow mold disease.

To prevent winter animal damage, barriers of hardware cloth placed around young trees and shrubs is the best means of protection from rabbit and vole damage. Make sure the barriers extend well above the usual snow line. Various taste repellents, such as Thiram or Millers Hot Sauce, can be effective in reducing deer and rabbit damage as long as animals have other food sources to turn to. Scent repellents, such as bags of human hair or bar soaps on a rope, have been shown to be effective in some situations but cannot always be relied on.

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