



## Pest Watch

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## Research Update: Herbicide Treatment to Reseeding Intervals

In the past three years we have conducted research to determine the safe intervals for reseeding turf into areas which have received preemergent herbicide applications. One of the surprising results was a distinct difference between years.

In 1990, pendimethalin displayed a remarkable degree of safety when bluegrass and perennial ryegrass were seeded just 8 weeks after treatment. However, in 1991 turf seedling establishment was dramatically reduced with a 12 week treatment-to-seeding interval. In 1990 we had a rather moist summer but in 1991 we had a very dry summer. Under these dry conditions the herbicide did not decompose as rapidly.

These experiments clearly demonstrated the impact which weather conditions may have on the residual activity of a preemergent herbicide. Un-

fortunately we cannot accurately predict the concentration of herbicide still present in the soil based on weather models. The safest way to be sure it is safe to reseed is to conduct a bioassay; in other words, test the soil before you waste money on seed and fertilizer. For instructions on how to conduct a bioassay see CUTT Vol. 2, No. 2 or contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office and request a copy of Weed Facts #3, "Conducting a Bioassay for Herbicide Residues".

Pendimethalin was used in this study as a common turfgrass herbicide. Other preemergent herbicides would respond similarly. Consult the herbicide label for safe treatment to seeding intervals.

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## Fertilize Now for Healthy Turf

We often hear the phrase that the best pest management strategy is growing healthy turf. Fall, more than any other time of year, is the best time to fertilize cool season grasses. In normal summers, the stresses of heat and drought take their toll on grasses. Rooting is shallow, lawn areas may be thin, and generally the plants are weak. Fall in the Northeast provides optimal growing conditions for the grasses to recover.

Fertilizing lawn areas in the early Fall with a complete, balanced fertilizer sets the grass on the right path to recovery. Plan on fertilizing lawn

areas between mid-August through the end of September. Use a fertilizer with an approximate nitrogen:phosphorus:potash ratio of 4-1-2. Examples would include a 20-5-10 and a 24-6-12. Quick release, or combinations of quick release and slow release nitrogen sources are ideal. Apply the fertilizers at a rate of one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet.

Strengthening those weak lawn areas now will mean fewer problems next summer.

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