

# Common pest, weed, and disease problems in your lawn

## Common Lawn Pests.

There are several potential pests that can attack your lawn either at establishment or when fully established. The worst of these is Grass Grub, Black Beetle and Porina.

### Grass Grub

Grass Grub attack lawns by eating the root system of the grass. They must be controlled as soon as you discover the problem or else major damage will be suffered.

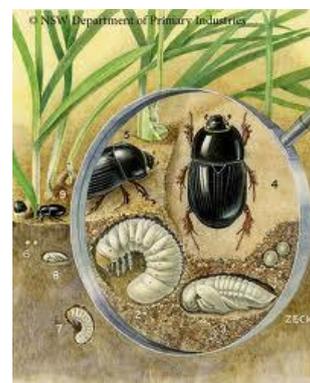
Damage becomes noticeable normally in the mid - late autumn / winter however grass grubs can be present up to the mid spring period. If they are present you will notice brown patches appearing over the lawn and you can very easily lift the thatch up often you will see the small white grass grubs. Grass grubs can be controlled with several readily available products, please ensure you read the label carefully as these products are only successful and safe when applied in accordance with them. They include Diazinon prills & Diazinon Liquid.



### Black Beetle

Black beetle is found throughout the northern part of the North Island in most regions from Taupo up also occurring as far south as the Taranaki region. It favours all warm free draining soil types typically sand and peaty soils.

The damage done by black beetle is very similar to that of grass grub. In severe infestation the pasture browns off, and can be rolled back like a mat owing to the complete destruction of the root system by the larvae (see photo). In less severe cases the pasture becomes dominated by clover. Black beetle outbreaks are associated with higher than average spring and summer temperatures. There is currently no chemical solution for the control of black beetle.



### Porina

Porina will only attack the top growth of your lawn, however if not controlled it will cause significant damage.

Porina are the most active from mid summer / late autumn.

Porina live in tunnels under the ground with fine casts at the surface held together by silken threads.

Once again there is a range of very suitable chemicals as mentioned for grass grub and Dimilin 25 W.



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## Common Lawn Weeds.

### White and other clovers.

White clover is usually a symptom of lawns that dry out over summer, and it will thrive under low mowing heights and where nitrogen fertilizers aren't applied often since it can fix its own nitrogen.

When trying to remove clover from grass turf, herbicides such as clopyralid, Dicamba (present in several turf herbicide mixtures) or picloram/triclopyr mixes are very effective. Note however that extreme care is required when composting clippings from lawns that have been sprayed with herbicides such as clopyralid or picloram as the residues are persistent. Keeping the turf dense and competitive through autumn will help stop new seedlings from establishing.



### Dandelion

Dandelion has a number of closely related weed species that look similar to it, and all these species tend to get lumped together and incorrectly get called "dandelions."

The deep tap-root allows it to stay green during droughts as it can obtain water from deep down in the soil profile. Any part of a dandelion root can produce new plants if it should be cut up, so dandelion will usually re-grow successfully following cultivation, especially if the roots aren't buried too deeply and therefore can be a problem in new lawns. The chemicals which can be used to kill it in turf such as clopyralid and Dicamba will also kill white clover.



### Hydrocotyle

Hydrocotyle is more of a problem in over-watered lawns, and also in any slight depressions that may exist (as water pools in these). Home garden lawns that are poorly drained and shaded will suffer more hydrocotyle problem.



Many turf herbicides such as mecoprop, ioxynil and dicamba only partially kill well-established hydrocotyle. One of the most effective herbicides for selective control in grass turf is triclopyr. This is sold under such trade names as Grazon, Brushoff and Victory, or in garden centres as Hydrocotyle Killer. It is also sold with picloram as Tordon Gold or Tordon Brushkiller for more broad-spectrum control of other weed species.



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## Common Lawn Diseases.

The new cultivars of turf grasses are selected very heavily on disease resistance however from time to time these diseases below may become an issue. The three main diseases to be aware of are:

### Damping off

Damping off attacks establishing lawns and is normally a problem during the Autumn. Cool, wet weather conditions help it spread.

Damping off attacks all lawn seed types and rapid seedling death can occur. Using too much water during dry and cool periods will increase the chances of having a damping off problem. Damping off can be controlled with fungicides such as Thiram.



### Dollar spot

Dollar spot can make an appearance in a lawn during Spring, Summer and Autumn. Dollar spot will be observed as small, round dead patches generally no more than 50 cm in size (however patches will sometimes combine to form larger patches) over a whole lawn.

A combination of humid weather and heavy dews help the occurrence of this disease. Controlled with fungicides that include Bravo and Green guard.



### Brown / Summer Patch.

Over feeding, allowing thatch build up and poor drainage can make the grass have a purplish - green look to it in irregular patches up to 0.5 cm in diameter.

Brown /Summer Patch is usually clearly visible on closely mown lawns. It is more common during Summer and Spring as Brown patch is more of a problem during humid conditions.

Brown/ Summer Patch can be controlled with fungicides that include Bravo and Green guard.



**When using any chemical please read the label carefully and follow instructions carefully. In case of poisoning 24/7 in New Zealand call: 0800 764-766**



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