



Plant Disease Update

Ophiosphaerella spp (Spring Dead Spot)

Spring Dead Spot is the common name for a number of fungi in the genus *Ophiosphaerella* (SDS). It is a persistent, soil-borne fungal disease that primarily affects mature, intensively managed couch turf. The damage becomes visible in spring as warm-season turf breaks dormancy, revealing circular patches of straw-coloured, lifeless grass that fail to recover while surrounding areas green up.

Although symptoms are usually only visible in Spring, when the turfgrass begins to green up, infection actually occurs months earlier during autumn and winter when soil conditions favour disease development. These fungi attacks roots, stolons and rhizomes, severely compromising the plant's ability to regrow. This delayed expression makes Spring Dead Spot one of the most damaging root diseases in couch-based turf systems.

What are the Symptoms of Spring Dead Spot & How to Identify It?

Spring Dead Spot can be identified through a combination of surface symptoms and below-ground damage.

Early Symptoms

- Circular patches of bleached, straw-coloured turf appearing as surrounding areas resume growth in spring.
- Patches often follow cool, wet conditions experienced during autumn and winter.

Advanced Identification Signs

- Patch size can range from a few centimetres up to one metre in diameter where infected patches coalesce.
- Older infections (2-3 years) may develop partial recovery in the centre, forming a ring or "frog-eye" appearance.
- Multiple rings may merge, creating curved or serpentine patterns across the turf surface.



Below-Ground Indicators

- Roots appear dark brown to black, showing advanced rot and structures known as ascocarps.
- Root systems are short, brittle and poorly developed
- Stolons and rhizomes fail to recolonise affected areas

Key Features

- Recovery of affected patches is extremely slow
- Weeds often invade due to the absence of healthy turf competition.
- Regrowth, is often weak, uneven and stunted.

Environmental Conditions That Favour Spring Dead Spot

Spring Dead Spot is most severe when the following conditions occur:

- Prolonged cool soil temperatures below 23 degrees C
- Prolonged soil moisture during autumn and winter
- Excessive thatch layers greater than 1.2 cm
- Poor drainage
- Low potassium availability as well as poor plant health and unbalanced nutrition.
- High nitrogen applications late in summer

Signs of Damage & What It Does to Turf

Spring Dead Spot causes long-term and often recurring damage to turf systems:

- Permanent dead patches that fail to recover during spring and summer
- Extensive root decay, limiting water and nutrient uptake
- Slow and uneven regrowth, leading to surface depressions in high-use areas
- Increased weed pressure due to reduced turf density
- Reduced durability, visual quality and playability on sports surfaces



Plant Disease Update

Ophiosphaerella spp (Spring Dead Spot)

Without preventative management, affected areas commonly reappear in the same locations and may expand year after year.

How to Manage Spring Dead Spot

Spring Dead Spot is one of the most challenging turf diseases to manage, making prevention essential.

- Recommended Management Practices
- Apply preventative systemic fungicides in autumn before soil temperatures decline
- Avoid excessive nitrogen applications late in summer
- Maintain balanced nutrition with particular attention to potassium levels
- Ensure adequate phosphorus and trace element availability
- Improve soil drainage to minimise prolonged winter moisture
- Reduce excessive thatch and organic matter, particularly where layers exceed 1.2 cm
- Control weeds to support turf recovery and limit competition

Once symptoms are visible in spring, control options are limited. Consistent preventative programs deliver the best long-term results.



Stolon of GN1 bermudagrass infected with spring dead spot, caused by the fungus Ophiosphaerella. This fungus is also known as Leptosphaeria. Note the small, dark brown circles, which are fungal infection cushions, and the thin dark strands of the fungal ectotrophic hyphae. Photo Copyright 2026 PACE Turf, LLC.

Figure 1: Table of Fungicides with a label registration for Spring Dead Spot

Product Name	Active Ingredient	Label Rate	FRAC Code	Manufacturer
Quali-Pro Enclave	365 g/L Chlorothalonil, 119 g/L Iprodione, 119 g/L Thiophanate-Methyl, 36 g/L Tebuconazole	16-24L per ha	M5, 2, 1, 3	Adama
Dedicate	200 g/L Tebuconazole, 100 g/L Trifloxystrobin	2-3L per ha	3, 11	Envu
Chipco GT	240 g/L Iprodione	100-200mL per 100m ²	2	Envu
Banner Fairway	250 g/L Propiconazole	6L per ha	3	Syngenta
Banner Maxx	155 g/L Propiconazole	10L per ha	3	Syngenta
Headway Maxx	62 g/L Azoxystrobin, 104 g/L Propiconazole	9L per ha	3, 11	Syngenta
Heritage Maxx	95 g/L Azoxystrobin	6L per ha	11	Syngenta
Posterity	200 g/L Pydiflumetofen	0.5-1L per ha	7	Syngenta
Velista	500 g/kg Penthiopyrad	1-1.5kg per ha	7	Syngenta
Azoxy 250 T&O	250 g/L Azoxystrobin	2.3L per ha	11	Turf Culture
Impala	96 g/L Azoxystrobin, 194 g/L Triticonazole	6L per ha	3, 11	Turf Culture
Tribeca	127 g/L Fludioxonil, 194 g/L Triticonazole	6L per ha	12, 3	Turf Culture



For more information, please contact

✉ sales@turfcareaus.com.au

☎ 02 4571 6444

🌐 www.turfcareaus.com.au

This publication is a guide only and no substitute for professional or expert advice. The product label should be consulted before use of any of the products referred to in this publication. Turfcare Australia shall not be liable for any results, loss, or damage whatsoever, whether consequential or otherwise through the use or application of products and/or materials referred to herein. Always read the label before use.