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PRESS RELEASE

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Grubs got your lawn? *Before you act, please read this!*

AUGUSTA—The snow is melted and the beautiful green lawn you've been longing for all winter is back. You're seeing green, but you're also noticing quite a few patches and larger sections of grass that are brown and dead looking. Major panic! "We've got grubs!" you exclaim out loud. "Quick honey, run to the hardware store!" *Not so fast, please!* Even if you are sure that what you are seeing is caused by grubs, the latest scientific research tells us that **spring is not the best time to manage a grub problem**. It may not be what you want to hear, but we are being asked by experts to be patient and treat the problem at the optimum time later in the season.

"Springtime is not the best time for grub control," says Jim Dill, manager of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Pest Management Office. "As they emerge from winter, grubs are mature and this is when they are least susceptible to pesticides. Wait until mid-June to apply a grub-control product. This will allow the insecticide to get fully incorporated into the soil to control the new grubs which are just hatching, are closer to the surface, and are more susceptible to the effects of pesticides. Trying to treat grubs in the spring by the homeowner is simply a waste of time and money. And, when they don't seem to be working, there's a tendency to over apply control products, and that's when excess chemicals run off into our water supplies, and can be harmful to human health and the environment."

There's no doubt that grubs have been plaguing the lawns of many homeowners in Maine over the past few years, especially in the Bangor area and southern regions of the state. When brown patches start appearing, it may mean that grubs have moved in...or maybe not.

"Before you do anything, there are some important points to consider," adds Dill. "First, you must be sure that grubs are the problem. Browning lawns can also be caused by drought, poor soil, disease, or other organisms. And, even if the grubs are positively identified, are they in sufficient numbers to really cause significant damage? Sometimes, reseeded the brown patches is all that can be done. There are also biological controls, like beneficial nematodes, that may be successful. If you contact us at the Pest Management Office, we can help you identify your problem and provide many options for how to solve it."

Grubs—the white, immature, C-shaped form of beetles, most notably Japanese beetles and European chafers—feed on the roots of grass and cause the browning that we see. Knowing the grub's life cycle is critical in figuring out if you have a problem, what to do about it, and when. From beetles emerging from the ground in early summer, through three distinct stages of grubs ending in the fall, keeping track of grubs can be difficult. The lawn damage you see in

the early spring is actually the result of late summer, fall, and winter feeding. When the grubs are fully grown in the spring, with the largest appetites, they continue to add to the fall-feeding damage, but it is usually far less noticeable.

Because it can be so tricky to figure out precisely what time is best for controlling grubs and which of the many available products to use, enlisting the services of a lawn care professional may be the surest course to take. They are specialists in treating just this type of problem and will identify exactly what's going on with your lawn. They know what works, what doesn't, and what is the best time for treatment—or if it's needed at all.

“When grub-control products are applied at the wrong time, not only do they not work, but many, many pounds of pesticide products are being applied that don't need to be and they can end up where they shouldn't,” says Deven Morrill of Lucas Tree Experts, a Portland-based company that also does lawn care. “As we professionals do, when homeowners apply products to their lawns, it is most important to read the label carefully, follow it exactly, and be sure it's the right product for the problem at hand, applied at the most effective time. Licensed applicators must also stay tuned to the latest research and apply it when it's proven effective.”

For help with your grub problem, contact the Pest Management Office at 800-287-0279. The PMO also maintains an excellent website with a wealth of information, <http://extension.umaine.edu/homeowner-ipm/>. Another resource for additional information on grubs can be found on the *Got Pests?* website, <http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/gotpests/bugs/grubs.htm>.

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