

Far West Texas Home and Garden Insect Pest Update

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Controlling White Grubs in West Texas Lawns

Many of you have experienced the anguish of white grub damage to your lawn. However, don't fret, because with a little knowledge and planning you can control white grubs before they damage your lawn.

White grubs are the immature stages of an adult beetle commonly referred to as "May" or "June" bugs (Fig 1). The adult beetles are brown and about 1/2 to 5/8 inch long and 3/8 inch wide (Fig 2). Adults emerge from the soil in late spring and early summer to mate. Mated females return to the soil

to lay eggs. About two weeks are needed for the young white grubs to hatch and borrow underground to begin feeding on your grass roots. You won't notice any damage until mid to late summer, that's when the white grubs have become large enough to consume most of the grass roots. Then you will see the characteristic

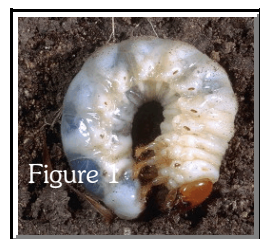


Figure 1



Figure 2 yellow and brown patches indicative of white grub damage. Many species of white grubs overwinter or

hibernate in the larval stage and come spring they pupate, this is the intermediate stage between larva and adult. The adults will emerge in late spring to early summer to start the cycle over again.

Now, how do you get rid of these pesky critters? Well, there are a couple of ways. One method for controlling white grubs is as follows: 1.) Adult white grubs (May or June bugs) frequently fly to night-lights, so check any nearby lights (porch, street, etc.) for adult white grub activity. If you see a lot of adults flying or crawling about then mark your calendar. In our area this should occur sometime early to mid June. 2.) Four to five weeks later take a flat-nosed spade and check a few places in your lawn. You can do this simply by cutting down about 3-4 inches and then peeling back the turf to expose the roots (Fig 3). Make sure to check areas of your



lawn that have a history of white grub infestation. Also, if you notice areas in your lawn that lack vigor then grab some of the turf in that area and tug. If white grubs are present the turf should feel loose or even pull up! 3.) Keep track of how many larvae

you find. Many of you know what white grubs look like, but for those of you who don't they will be off-white, about 1/2 to 1 inch long and C-shaped. If you find an average of 5 or more white grubs per square foot of lawn then you need to treat with a pesticide. Fewer than 5 white grubs per square foot and you do not need to treat. Pesticides that should work well for remedial control include Dylox (Bayer Advanced Lawn 24-hour Grub Control), and Oftanol. 4.) If you need to treat, apply the pesticide according to the label then promptly water the lawn. You need to irrigate enough to give at least 1/2 to 1 inch of water. Watering is needed to move the pesticide down to the grass root zone where the white grubs are feeding.

The next method requires a little less effort than the previous method, but starts as the first. You need to determine the peak flight activity of adult white grubs. However, instead of waiting 4-5 weeks to sample, simply wait about two weeks then broadcast either of the pesticides imidacloprid (Bayer Season-long Grub Control) or halofenozide (Grub-b-Gone, Grubex, Grubex II, Mach II, Hi-Yield Kill-A-Grub Plus Lawn Fertilizer). These pesticides are specially designed to give control for several weeks. Make sure you irrigate before and after treatment so you move the pesticide down to the root system. If you notice damage caused by white grubs then they are probably large and will be difficult to control. Do not use halofenozide as a rescue treatment. Halofenozide is a growth regulator and will not work on large white grubs.