



## Black turfgrass *Ataenius*

*Ataenius spretulus*

Order Coleoptera, Family Scarabaeidae; scarab beetles

Native pest

**Pest information:** Turfgrasses, root-feeding grub; adults consume soil high in organic matter.

**Description:** The adult is a small, black scarab beetle around 6 mm in length that is common around high maintenance golf courses, especially highly watered and fertilized areas. Grubs are very small, around 6 mm in length. It is a native insect that has emerged as a turf pest in the last 30 years.

**Life history:** Adults overwinter in woodlots and start to fly in May to June to deposit eggs in the thatch. The grubs feed and develop over two months with peak damage in late July. Most root injury occurs near the soil-thatch interface. Grubs pupate in the soil and start emerging in early August. There can be two generations a year.

**Overwintering:** Adults in woodlots.

**Damage symptoms:** The roots of the grass are severed, so blades pull easily.

**Monitoring:** Adults may be controlled when either Horse Chestnut or Vanhoutte spirea are in full bloom, usually about May 5–15. Larvae should be treated about June 10–20. High levels of infestation of this pest can be tolerated. Control when greater than 50 grubs/sq. ft. are found. Look for brown patches of turf that pull out of the ground, as the roots have been removed by grub feeding. Identify a grub problem by examining a square foot sample of lawn along the border where dead or damaged grass meets healthy grass. When grub densities are high, the blades pull away from the roots and the turf rolls back like a carpet. Skunks and moles are known to use grubs for food.

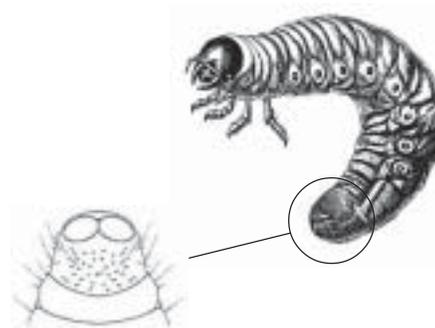
**Cultural control:** Maintain healthy grass by fertilizing in the spring and fall and watering during periods of drought.

**Chemical control:** Halofenozide and imidacloprid are not fast acting and are often used in areas that experienced high damage the previous year. Apply from mid May until early August. Do not use broad spectrum insecticides routinely, as they will do more harm than good and will kill the beneficial insects that live in the turf, which can cause pest outbreaks.

**Biological control:** Carabid ground beetles, staphylinid rove beetles, ants, spiders.

**Plant mortality risk:** High, if threshold is reached.

**Biorational pesticides:** *Beauveria bassiana*, halofenozide, spinosad



**Raster of an *Ataenius* beetle grub.** The hind end of the grub is called the raster. It contains sutures and hairs used to identify the grub species.



Black turfgrass *Ataenius* larva, pupa, and adults. (217)  
Photo: Lee Hellman

**Conventional pesticides:** acephate, beta-cyfluthrin, cyfluthrin, bifenthrin, chlorpyrifos, imidacloprid, lambda-cyhalothrin, trichlorfon