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## Look out for hairy Chinch bugs

By M. K. Sears  
Department of  
Environmental Biology  
A serious pest of lawns in  
recent years has been the  
hairy chinch bug. This insect,  
which was quite obscure until  
the early part of this decade,  
has now become a problem to  
homeowners in most subur-  
ban areas of the province.

Because of its small size  
and secretive habits, it goes  
unnoticed until the warm  
months of summer when its  
damage seems to rapidly  
spread over the lawn.  
Actually, its habits are well-  
known and there are com-  
monly available insecticides  
to control an infestation well  
before any damage is caused.  
In the spring, chinch bugs  
emerge from the leaves and  
taller grass found beneath  
shrubs, under deciduous trees  
and in flower beds and begin  
feeding on grass plants. Their  
sharp, piercing mouthparts  
penetrate the grass stems  
and the plant juices are  
removed.

Eggs are laid individually  
as the bugs disperse from  
their over-wintering sites.  
The eggs hatch into tiny in-  
dividuals, called nymphs,  
which feed in the same  
manner as the adults. These  
nymphs are quite small when  
hatched, but bright red in  
color. As they grow larger,  
their color changes to a brick  
red and finally gray as they  
approach maturity. All  
stages have a white band  
across their backs.

By the middle of July, dam-  
age may begin to show near  
the earlier over-wintering  
sites. The damage appears as  
dead, sunken areas of grass  
which enlarge and coalesce  
as the season progresses.  
Lack of competition from  
grass plants allows weeds to  
flourish resulting in an  
uneven weed-choked lawn.  
As the temperatures  
remain warm and rainfall  
decreases, more severe dam-  
age may result in an entire  
dead lawn. Consequently, the  
first or second week of July is  
usually the optimum period  
for applying insecticides.

It may be difficult to deter-  
mine whether there are any  
chinch bugs present on lawns  
in early July, especially if  
damage is not visible. How-  
ever, by flooding a suspected  
area of turf with water, the  
bugs are forced to the surface  
where they can be seen more  
easily.

A large can, as much as six  
inches in diameter, with the  
bottom removed is most use-  
ful for this procedure as it can  
be forced into the turf,  
flooded with water and the  
bugs will float to the surface.  
Randomly repeat this  
procedure a minimum of 10  
times over the lawn; if any  
chinch bugs are observed,  
treatment is considered  
necessary.

There are several excellent  
insecticides available for  
controlling chinch bugs. They  
include carbaryl, chlorpyri-  
fos and diazinon. These may  
be purchased as liquid con-  
centrates, powders to be  
mixed with water, or as  
granular materials that can  
be applied with fertilizer  
spreaders. Instructions for  
use are printed on the con-  
tainers and should be read  
and understood before ap-  
plication.

An important procedure,  
not to be omitted, is irrigating  
the treated lawn following  
application. This allows more  
of the insecticide to penetrate  
the crown of the grass plants  
and forces the chinch bugs to  
remain in the thatch layer  
where they will better contact  
the insecticide.

In early July, chinch bugs  
are not yet mature and the  
warm, dry period of summer  
has just begun. If controlled  
adequately, little damage

should result. However,  
many homeowners do not be-  
come aware of the problem  
until later in the summer.  
Chinch bugs can still be con-  
trolled, but often more severe  
damage results and it  
becomes necessary for some

remedial lawn renovation.  
In this instance, weeds  
should be controlled first,  
then damaged areas re-  
seeded. Severely damaged  
lawns may have to be  
renovated and levelled and  
then reseeded or resodded.

In most cases, if chinch  
bugs are not controlled, they  
will return the following year.  
They do not seem to disperse  
far from their feeding sites.  
Therefore, the most effective  
control is usually achieved on  
a neighborhood basis.

# YOUR FAMILY CAN LIVE UNTIL 1979

FIND OUT THE DETAILS AT  
OUR PREVIEW OPENING  
THIS WEEKEND

