

An Emerging Disease on *Poa annua* Putting Greens caused by a *Rhizoctonia* species

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A new disease of annual bluegrass greens was first noticed in 2004 and 2005 that appeared in weather too warm for Yellow Patch (*Rhizoctonia cerealis*). Yellow Patch typically occurs between 50-65° F; the new disease appears between 60-95° F. Outbreaks occur in both cool and hot weather, always on annual bluegrass, and a *Rhizoctonia*-like fungus is consistently isolated. Initially termed warm-temperature yellow patch, the disease has had numerous names since then including brown ring patch, yellow ring, *R. zaeae*, Sheath and leaf spot, and *Waitea* patch.



Symptoms first appear as yellow rings ranging from a few inches to a foot, which turn light brown to reddish brown as the disease progresses. The turfgrass is slow to recover. Further investigation (including molecular fingerprinting) has identified the pathogen as *Waitea circinata* var. *circinata*, a “new” *Rhizoctonia* species, and the disease named Brown Ring Patch. In 2006, disease symptoms appeared throughout New England and New York and again in the spring and early summer of 2007. The pathogen has been confirmed as causing disease on annual bluegrass in ten states and also on rough bluegrass (*Poa trivialis*).

Brown Ring Patch is similar to other *Rhizoctonia* species, but appears to infect upper roots, crown, and stem as well as foliage of individual plants. It also seems to degrade thatch and gives rise to sunken rings.

Most fungicides labeled for control of *Rhizoctonia* are active against Brown Ring Patch, with the exception of thiophanate-methyl (Cleary’s 3336), but their curative activity is much less than their preventive activity. Tank mixes or pre-mixtures of active ingredients may be more effective than applications of a single fungicide. The pathogen acts somewhat like superficial fairy ring; cultural tactics such as use of surfactants, larger spray volumes, and thatch management should be employed. Applications should be made preventively where there is a history of the disease. Maintain adequate fertility to maximize recovery after damage has occurred.

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