



# Turf Talk

## *Harmful Lawn Pests: Ticks, White Grubs, Chinch Bugs*

### *Ticks*

Disease-carrying ticks have grown in population and range in New Hampshire and Vermont over the past decade, marking an increase in reported cases for both existing and new tick-borne diseases. It seems that no matter the winter weather, ticks are surviving and making a strong appearance every spring. The deer tick is perhaps the most infamous tick as it carries the serious Lyme disease, Anaplasmosis and Babesiosis. The dog tick carries diseases including Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Tularemia.

While spending time outdoors, the chance of tick bites can be minimized by wearing long pants and socks. Permethrin has been proven to be an effective method to reduce bites ([tickinfo.com](http://tickinfo.com)). However, many people find that the best way to dramatically decrease contact with ticks around their house is to reduce the tick population itself, especially when children or pets are involved.

Tick populations can be reduced anytime of the year but the spring and late fall are the most vital because of their life cycle. Spraying for ticks in spring to early summer is particularly effective as it reduces last year's adult ticks preparing to breed and therefore the new generation to come. Spraying in the fall is also important as the adult population is reduced before they can overwinter and emerge the following spring.

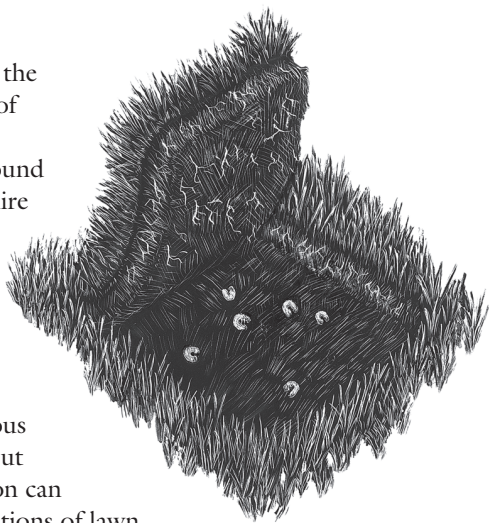
Treating for ticks often requires treating the perimeter of your woods, fields or lawn as related to tick resting sites. A typical spray lasts 3-4 weeks and establishes a 'no tick' zone. However, no risk is ever completely eliminated. Larger tick concentrations or 'hot spots' may often require several sprays in the spring to early summer for increased control.

We offer several high-end tick reduction sprays including organic options to satisfy client concerns about the safety of their children, animals and the environment. Enjoy your yard more and worry less about ticks.

# Harmful Lawn Pests

## *White Grubs*

White grubs are the immature form of several beetles found in the ground in New Hampshire and Vermont that eat turf roots and can cause extensive damage in the spring and fall. They are voracious eaters and without proper prevention can destroy large sections of lawn



in mere weeks, especially in sunny locations. White grubs also attract crows and skunks that often cause more harm than the actual grub itself.

Although a curative treatment, occurring after the damage has become visible is possible, the best course of action for high-risk lawns is to treat preventively in the spring or summer. High-risk lawns include sunny locations and especially those where damage has occurred in the past. With a preventative application, grub populations can be dramatically reduced, avoiding grub damage. There are organic and high-end products like Acelepryn available to effectively control grubs in a lawn. Milky spore is not an effective control measure. It targets only one type of damaging grub out of dozens and does not survive the cold weather in New England.

## *Neonicotinoids and Bees*

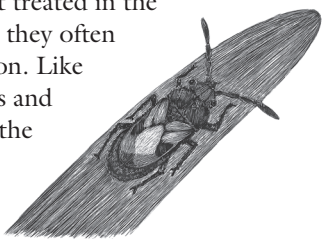
Consumer awareness continues to rise surrounding a specific class of pesticides, known as “neonicotinoids” and their negative effect on bees. This is an important issue and one we take very seriously. The most common use for neonicotinoids in turf care is to control grubs. It’s both effective and economical. However, due to the ongoing research on this class of pesticides and their possible link to having a negative impact on bees, Chippers decided several years ago to adopt Acelepryn as our recommended bee-safe premium product to control grubs in a lawn. Not only does Acelepryn not harm bees, it is safe for use around other beneficial insects such as ladybugs. Because

Acelepryn is a patented product, it is therefore notably more expensive than generic neonicotinoids.

Many clients have asked about using organic products instead of neonicotinoids, but in the case of controlling grubs, balancing this choice can be problematic. The most common organic used for this application is only moderately effective, at best, and is potentially harmful to bees if they are sprayed directly, a real threat if bees are actively pollinating a lawn with clover. In cases where a client chooses neonicotinoids over Acelepryn, we employ the best known practices to reduce the impact on bees. For instance, not treating a lawn while clover is in bloom and using granular formulations rather than liquid are proven methods that reduce potential harm when treating for grubs.

### *Chinch Bugs*

Chinch bugs are very difficult to see and even more difficult to diagnose before damage occurs. Unlike white grubs that are found in the soil, chinch bugs are on the surface, living and hiding in the thatch layer of your lawn. Because they are so small, they are difficult for the untrained eye to see. Left untreated, chinch bugs destroy a lawn, affecting areas as small as your hand to as large as an entire lawn. Their populations explode in dry, hot weather and the damage can be mistaken for that caused by dry weather or drought. Chinch bugs are best treated in the spring or in late summer since they often have two generations per season. Like ticks, they overwinter as adults and emerge in the spring, making the reduction of their population a priority in May or June before they reproduce.



### *Moles and Voles*

Moles and voles are easily confused and are often problems for lawns, ornamental landscape plantings and bulbs.

Moles are soil dwelling, carnivorous pests that prefer to eat earthworms, ants and grubs among other insects. Their primary food source is earthworms, contrary to the popular notion that grubs are their favorite meal. On the other hand, voles are essentially herbaceous plant-eating field mice that prefer above-ground dining. Voles can eat

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turf, creating surface tunnels visible as the snow melts in the early spring or during the summer in the case of severe infestations.

While both moles and voles can create shallow tunnels in the soil just below the surface, moles produce larger and deeper tunnels, often creating large mounds or craters of soil as they push it up to the surface. Voles often start using flower beds or other ornamental plantings as a suitable food source, eventually making their way into the lawn. Moles can move in from surrounding woodlands or fields in search of insects below ground.

The largest difference between moles and voles is their preferred food source and the damage they cause to a lawn or surrounding plantings. Both are most often a nuisance in the early spring or late fall when they are most actively searching for a meal, especially in a lawn setting. We recommend mouse traps with peanut butter as a bait for voles in and around surface tunnels or in flower beds. In the case of moles, sometimes the activity of mowing or using the lawn cause them to depart. If your mole problem persists, a licensed technician can use a bait worm to eradicate them.

## *Other Lawn Pests*

There are other damaging lawn pests such as cutworms, sod webworm and billbugs.

*If you suspect you may have a lawn pest, contact us for more information.*

*Our Consultations  
Are Always  
Complimentary*



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