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**NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:**

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***GREGG COUNTY***

**CHINCH BUGS IN HOME LAWNS**

The southern chinch bug is one of the most important insect pests of St. Augustine grass in Texas.

Although the southern chinch bug is a serious pest on St. Augustine grass lawns, it occasionally may feed on zoysiagrass, centipedegrass, bahiagrass, or bermudagrass.

***Identification***

Expanding, irregular patches of dead or stunted grass surrounded by a halo of yellowing, dying grass often provide the first clue to the presence of chinch bugs. These islands of dying grass tend to increase in size and merge as insect numbers increase. Damage can develop rapidly, especially in sunny locations during hot, dry weather.

Chinch bug damage can be confused with certain lawn diseases or other physiological disorders. Brown patch is a common disease affecting the leaf blades of St. Augustine grass. Brown patch symptoms, however, usually occur in a circular or semi-circular pattern, as opposed to the irregular-shaped areas of dead and dying grass that result from chinch bug feeding. Chinch bug damage also can be difficult to distinguish from that caused by drought. Detection of significant numbers of the insects themselves is the best proof that chinch bugs are the cause of the damage.

Adult southern chinch bugs are small and slender, 1/6 to 1/5 of an inch long. They have black bodies with white wings. Each wing bears a distinctive, triangular black mark. Chinch bugs are found most readily in the weakened, yellowing grass around a dead spot in the lawn.

***MANAGING CHINCH BUGS***

***Cultural controls***

Control of chinch bugs starts with proper lawn care. Keeping thatch to a minimum, for example, reduces chinch bug numbers and makes other control methods more effective. Thatch is the layer of dead plant material found between the green tops of the grass plant and the soil below. Thatch provides a protective home for chinch bugs, and chemically binds with many insecticides, making such controls less effective.

***Chemical control***

Good water and fertility management and thatch control dramatically reduce the need for insecticides to control chinch bugs. However, when dead and dying zones in turfgrass are accompanied by the presence of chinch bugs, some corrective action is needed. Chemical insecticides when used according to label directions, can provide a rapid reduction in chinch bug

numbers.

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