

LOUISIANA HOME LAWN SERIES

A guide to maintaining a healthy Louisiana lawn



Two-lined spittlebug

Description

The two-lined spittlebug, *Prosapia bicinata* Say (Hemiptera: Cercopidae), is a common turfgrass insect pest in Louisiana. Both nymphs and adults injure turfgrass by sucking plant juices from grass leaves using their piercing mouthparts. Injury appears as small patches of weakened or stressed yellow turfgrass that may eventually die. Spittlebug injury is typically observed in mid-spring and again in mid-summer. Two-lined spittlebugs commonly attack warm-season turfgrass species such as centipedegrass and bermudagrass.

Identification

In Louisiana, the two-lined spittlebug typically completes two generations in a year. In early spring, nymphs emerge from the overwintering eggs that females laid in the thatch or leaf stems during the previous year. Nymphs mature into adults after about one month, and the life cycle is repeated with the second peak of adults occurring in mid-summer. Nymphs are light yellow and have a small orange spot on either side of their bodies. They are normally found in spittle masses around the soil surface. Adults have black bodies with red eyes. They are distinguished by two bright orange lines across their wings.



Figure 1. Spittlebug nymph and spittle mass



Figure 2. Spittlebug adult

Indicators of Insect Presence

Spittlebugs are most active in the morning and may hide in the grass during the day.

Nymphs feed in spittle masses composed of digestive secretions and air bubbles.

- Look for spittle masses just below or above the soil surface.

Adults can inject a toxin into leaves that causes yellow streaking.

Adults and nymphs suck sap from leaves.

- Look for patches of weakened turfgrass that turns yellow then brown followed by leaf curling.

Most injury occurs in March and April and again in August and September.

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December



Injury common



Injury occasional



Injury rare

Cultural Control Practices

One way to reduce insect injury and accelerate turfgrass recovery is to maintain a healthy lawn through proper fertilization and irrigation and regular mowing. Never apply more than 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per application, and always follow soil test recommendations for proper fertility. Irrigate as needed while taking rainfall into account. Mow regularly, but never remove more than one-third of the leaf blade height at one mowing. Thatch can develop over time and may need to be reduced through vertical mowing. Compaction can form more quickly on finer texture soils and in areas where there is high traffic. Dethatching or aeration need to be performed in late spring to summer when the turfgrass is actively growing. Properly maintaining a lawn through these cultural practices promotes dense and vigorous turfgrass and can increase tolerance to insect injury.

Chemical Control Practices

In addition to cultural practices, insecticide applications may be required to achieve effective insect control. Treat with insecticides when two-lined spittlebug injury is excessive. When using any insecticide, you must follow the manufacturer's labeled directions concerning all application parameters.

For more information regarding insecticides for turfgrass insect pests please reference the Louisiana Insect Pest Management Guide at the LSU AgCenter website, www.lsuagcenter.com.

Insecticide Active Ingredients
bifenthrin
carbaryl
deltamethrin

To submit insect samples for identification send to:

Dr. Dennis Ring
404 Life Sciences, Department of Entomology
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Need more information? Visit www.lsuagcenter.com to contact your local LSU AgCenter Extension Parish Office.

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