

Controlling Spring Dead Spot using the correct nitrogen source.

Utilising the correct nitrogen source can have an enormous impact on whether couch is likely to be subjected to spring dead spot (SDS).

Commonly used nitrate nitrogen sources such as ammonium nitrate or calcium nitrate have been shown to increase the severity of SDS.

In contrast acidifying fertiliser sources such as ammonium sulphate or ammonium chloride have been shown to reduce SDS severity, delay the appearance of symptoms, and promote the recovery of diseased turf. Acidifying nitrogen sources are the preferred nitrogen sources for intensively managed, high-risk couch grass turf.

To further reduce the risk of disease, fertilize with nitrogen lightly but frequently to maintain moderate turf growth throughout the growing season.

Continued use of slow-release forms of organic or inorganic fertilizers may also reduce the risk of SDS and similar patch diseases.

In the autumn at renovation time avoid applying high rates of any fertilizer containing a fast-release form of nitrogen, such as ammonium nitrate, ammonium sulphate, and similar nitrogen fertilizers. Using fast-release forms of nitrogen has been shown to increase SDS severity on couch previously damaged by this disease.

Apply nitrogen and potassium in a 1:1 to 2:1 ratio. Make autumn applications of potash using the chloride (muriate of potash) rather than the sulphate form of potassium, particularly on turf previously damaged by SDS.