



Pest e-alerts



Entomology and Plant Pathology, Oklahoma State University
127 Noble Research Center, Stillwater, OK74078
405.744.5527

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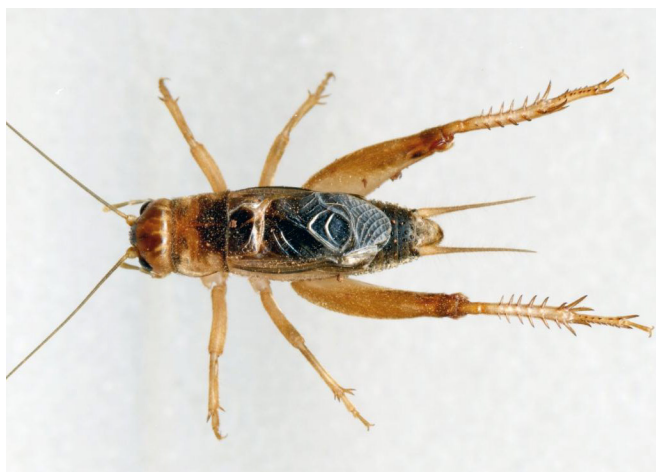
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Turfgrass Nuisance Pests: Shorttailed Crickets

Eric J. Rebek, Extension Horticultural Entomologist

The recent warm, wet weather and mild winter temperatures have resulted in healthy populations of shorttailed crickets, *Anurogryllus arboreus*, emerging early across much of Oklahoma. Many folks from as far away as Lipscomb County, Texas have called me about strange mounds appearing in home lawns, sports fields, and other recreation areas. These structures resemble crayfish tubes or earthworm castings and are actually entrances to the burrows of shorttailed crickets. These peculiar creatures are



considered minor pests of turfgrass since the mounds they create are unsightly.

Description

These crickets are similar to field crickets except for the short ovipositor (i.e., egg-laying organ found on females), from which their common name derives. Adults are brown and measure about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long. They shed their hindwings soon after becoming adults and never fly. The light brown nymphs are smaller than adults and lack wings.

Life Cycle

Shorttailed crickets overwinter as nearly mature nymphs in burrows in the soil. After several molts in early spring, they reach the adult stage. Mated females begin to lay eggs in late spring or early summer. Hatching takes place in a multi-chambered burrow constructed by the adult. For a short period of time, both eggs and nymphs may be found in the burrow. Between the fourth and sixth instars (i.e., juvenile development stages), nymphs leave the parent burrows and construct burrows of their own. At first the burrows are small, but as the crickets mature

the burrows are enlarged and may reach depths of 12 to 20 inches. Only one cricket is found per burrow except when parent burrows contain eggs and nymphs. There is one generation per year.

Hosts

Shorttailed crickets feed on grasses, weeds, pine cones, and pine seedlings. They are seldom seen because they forage at night. Their feeding damage to turfgrass is apparently negligible.



Damage

Burrows are constructed by nymphs and adults, resulting in unsightly mounds of small soil pellets, which may smother the surrounding grass. In Oklahoma, they are seldom noticed until the maturing nymphs begin to construct new burrows. This is usually sometime in August and continues through October, although shorttailed crickets also become active in spring as they exit hibernation. The burrows are rebuilt each time they are washed away by rains.

Inspection and Control

Look for mounds of small soil pellets or soil deposits similar to those constructed by crayfish. Treatment provides only partial control and is seldom needed unless large numbers of mounds are encountered. If treatment is attempted, an insecticide that is registered for late summer or fall control of white grubs and other soil insects will reduce numbers of shorttailed crickets. Also, a simple, non-chemical method of management is to knock down mounds with a rake or other tool.

References:

Vittum, P.J., M.G. Villani, and H. Tashiro. 1999. Turfgrass Insects of the United States and Canada, 2nd Edition. Cornell University Press.

Dr. Richard Grantham
Director, Plant Disease and Insect Diagnostic Laboratory

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