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TWO-LINED SPITTLEBUG

Both the adult and the immature (nymph) stages of this insect can cause problems. The adults damage holly leaves while feeding. This can range from leaf distortion, wilting, or discoloration of young leaves to blotches on the underside of older leaves. Adult spittlebugs may feed on grasses. This results in chlorotic stippling of the blades. The nymphs suck sap from the stems of grasses. Centipedegrass and St. Augustinegrass are the preferred hosts. Heavy feeding damage makes the grass look unhealthy.



An adult two-lined spittlebug.

The dark brown to black adult spittlebugs are wedge-shaped with distinct red eyes and legs. Most adults have two distinct red or orange lines across the wings and a narrow band across the thorax. Unbanded adults occur as well. Adults are about 0.38 inch long. The adults spend much of the day hidden in hollies and other shrubbery. They are most active at night and may be attracted to lights.

Spittlebug nymphs have a cream-colored body and a brown head. The eyes are red. The nymphs produce a white, frothy liquid that covers them and provides protection as well as a high humidity environment, which is needed for proper development. The nymphs

spend most of their life near the base of the grass plant. When they are ready to molt to the adult stage, they move to the tips of the grass. The spittle mass dries around them and the final molt takes place within the mass.



A spittle mass on a grass stem.



An exposed nymph on the spittle mass.

There are two generations of spittlebugs in South Carolina. Spittlebugs spend the winter in the egg stage. The eggs are found in hollow stems, under leaf sheaths, and at the base of the plants in moist litter and debris. Most of the overwintering eggs hatch in March and April. Adults begin to appear in June. A second generation is produced and peak adult activity occurs in August and September. Damage from the second generation is usually much more serious.

Spittlebugs cause the most damage to grass when there is a thick thatch buildup. Cultural management includes dethatching and topdressing when appropriate. Insecticide treatments should be directed toward the nymphal stages. Susceptible turfgrass should be monitored closely, especially in July. Mowing and irrigating several hours before an insecticide treatment will enhance control. Treating late in the day is preferred. Use an insecticide labeled for spittlebug control on turfgrass.

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