

**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Mushrooms & Pests-Lawn Pests

One of the more frequent questions I receive this time of year is "What can I do to get rid of mushrooms in my lawn?"

The mushroom, also called toadstools and puffballs, is the above-ground fruiting or reproductive structure of a fungus that lives on and helps decay organic matter. The organic matter may include buried wood, roots, or tree stumps. Most mushrooms do not damage the lawn but are objectionable because they are unsightly and repeatedly occur.

Mushrooms tend to be more of a problem this time of the year because of cool and moist conditions typical of spring. As summer temperatures arrive, they tend to disappear until the following spring.

Unfortunately, there is no practical or permanent way to eliminate mushrooms. When the buried wood is completely decayed, the mushrooms will disappear. The easiest and most practical solution, although it is only temporary is to break the mushrooms with a rake or lawn mower.

Sometimes the mushrooms will grow in circles or arcs causing the grass to be a dark green color. The circles may be as small as one foot or as large as hundreds of feet in diameter. The ring of the darker green grass is caused by nutrients released as the fungus breaks down organic matter. Sometimes the color difference can be masked with an application of nitrogen fertilizer. If there is a region of pale green or yellow grass within the ring, aerate the lawn and water thoroughly so that water penetrates the soil surface.

Quite often calls are received about earthworms causing the lawn surface to be lumpy. This situation usually occurs in healthy, heavily watered and fertilized lawns. For the most part earthworms are beneficial to the lawn as they recycle nutrients and aerate the soil. Control with an insecticide is necessary only when their population develops to a level that damages the lawn or when castings severely roughen the surface. Usually the castings can be flattened with either a

power rake or a weighted lawn roller when the soil surface is damp. Annual power raking each spring is often sufficient to destroy castings from season to season.

North Dakota Waters Safe

There is some good news for agriculture producers and homeowners in North Dakota who use pesticides to grow the safest food and simply make life more comfortable. The state now has three years of surface water sampling for pesticides in all major watersheds across the state.

For all of the 180 pesticides, concentrations were significantly below levels deemed harmful by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. There were a total of 11 detections of four different pesticides (atrazine, bentazon, dimethenamid and MCPA). Common trade names of these pesticides are Aatrex, Basagram, Frontier and MCP. Even better news for western North Dakota is all of the pesticide detections were in the eastern edge of the state and in the Red River or its tributaries.

The most commonly detected pesticides were the herbicides atrazine and bentazon, detected four and three times respectively. MCPA and dimethanamid were each detected twice.