Beet Armyworm Pupae: The Case of the Underground Pupae

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Beet Armyworm Pupae

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Field Visit

The Case of the Underground Pupae

**Situation:** The customer wanted identification of pupae found undersea short paspalum (*Paspalum vaginatum*). The grass is part of a well-kept golf course. However, the grass in the affected area was moist, appear diseased, and could be easily lifted to reveal the pupae.

**The Solution:** The Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines a pupa as the quiescent stage of a metamorphic insect that occurs between the larva and the adult. I collected several pupae and placed them in a glass jar hoping for a successful transformation to adulthood. One pupa realized my hope and a small moth emerged. The moth was identified as beet armyworm, *Spodoptera exigua*.

**Beet armyworm:** Seashore paspalum has occasional problems with mole crickets, sod webworms, spittlebugs, white grubs, bill bugs, cutworms and fall armyworms. Studies are need to determine whether seashore paspalum is a host of beet armyworm. Pupation occurs in the soil. Duration of the pupal stage is six to seven days during warm weather. Being a foliage feeder, the larvae would not have been responsible for the decayed roots.

**Controls:** In their quiescent stage, the pupae are not affected by insecticides. Control of the larvae is easily done using one of many recommended
insecticides.

**Memo:** Always follow label rates and recommendations when using pesticides. Test spray new pesticides or pesticides new to your yard/facility on a small scale to check for plant safety before widespread use.