The Case of the Loose Sod

Situation: A landscape company wanted me to see for myself grub damage on a property in Cape Coral. The damage was particularly severe and the grubs unusually large. Grub damage in St. Augustine Floratam lawn is not unusual. The usual culprits are *Phyllophaga* sp. or *Cyclocephala* sp. better known as white grubs, June or May beetles. Grubs damage the grass by feeding on the roots about an inch below the surface. Heavy infestations completely destroy the roots, and the grass can be rolled back like a carpet.

The Results: The Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines a grub as a soft thick wormlike larva of an insect. In the case the insect was identified as *Tomarus subtropicus* or sugarcane grub. This grub was previously reported in Charlotte, Alachus, Hillsborough, Manatee, Palm Beach, Pinellas and Sarasota Counties. The adult is a beetle believed native to the Caribbean and was first reported in Florida in 1964. Entire root systems can be consumed by these grubs, leaving the grass spongy when walked upon. Grubs have been observed still feeding on the roots in January in the greater Tampa area.

The Control: The optimal timing for a preventative treatment would be in May or June by using Merit or Mach 2. However, several turfgrass managers have tried this and still get call backs in September/October because of additional grub damage. Curative control for larger grubs may include products like Dylox (trichlorfon) or Sevin (carbaryl).

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.

Reference: ENY-300 http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ig001 http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/in202