

Does your lawn have thatch problem?

NEWARK, Del. — Below the surface of your beautiful lawn, a serious problem may be developing. It's called Thatch. You'll find it between the green grass and soil surface. "Thatch is a mat-like layer of dead roots, stems and leaf bases with causes as complicated as its cures," says University of Delaware extension turf specialist William H. Mitchell.

Thatch can impede root development and shelter damaging insects. It also can intercept lime and fertilizer, delaying their penetration of the soil where they are needed to correct acidity and nourish the grass.

Thatch often is hard to wet, which means that heavy rain may run off rather than enter the soil. When thatch infested lawns are renovated without completely removing this mat-like layer of dead vegetation, seeding problems often result. Sod installed over a thatch layer will likely fail.

To complicate the thatch

problem, Mitchell says there's no way to predict when its damaging effects will occur. In spite of a thick layer of thatch, a lawn may still look normal. One explanation is that thatch is just one of several stresses turfgrasses must endure. But when combined with heat, drought, unbalanced fertility or disease, the result can be disaster.

"Thatch often develops on the best cared for lawns," the specialist says. "The cause is simple: lawn grass residues don't decompose as rapidly as they're produced. It follows that any combination of factors, such as heavy fertilization which promotes grass growth, and acid soil which slows the activity of micro-organisms responsible for residue breakdown, will cause thatch buildup." Micro-organisms also won't function well in a dry environment, so look for thatch buildup under these conditions.

For some reason, thatch rarely occurs when foot traffic is heavy. The best explanation seems to be that moderate compaction com-

presses thatch and underlying soil, facilitating the movement of soil moisture into the thatch to sustain microbial activity and residue breakdown.

Lawn grasses vary in their susceptibility to thatch problems, Mitchell says. Red fescues are prone because their residues resist decay. Also, red fescue often is grown in the shade where competing tree roots deplete soil moisture. Tall fescue, on the other hand, rarely is infested with thatch. Some Kentucky bluegrass varieties such as Merion frequently are associated with the problem. This may be largely a result of management. "Homeowners with lawns of Merion or other premier bluegrass varieties may be the ones most likely to overfertilize and overwater," he says. Both practices can lead to thatch buildup.

"A little thatch is not damaging," the specialist says. "It softens a fall on playing fields and may help minimize soil com-

paction." He believes lawns should be managed to balance the production and decomposition of turfgrass residues, so a serious thatch layer won't develop.

Mitchell offers this recipe for a relatively thatch-free lawn.

Don't Overfertilize. A green, attractive lawn should be the goal. Excessive growth increases mowing costs and may contribute to thatch buildup. "Using more than three pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn may lead to a potential thatch problem," he says.

Watch the pH (Acidity) of Lawn Soil. Pay special attention to the top inch where thatch is most likely to develop. If you have limed your soil recently, look for evidence that lime is being retained in the thatch layer. If this is the case, the lime will do little good since this layer often is much too dry for the limestone to dissolve and neutralize soil acidity.

"Lawn service firms often appear more interested in applying

fertilizer and pesticides than limestone," Mitchell says. "Acids constantly are being produced in lawn soil. It's a natural event. As a general rule, 50 pounds of ground limestone per 1,000 square feet should be broadcast every four years. This relatively inexpensive treatment can be applied any time of year. Ask your lawn specialist about plans to apply lime."

Don't Wait for Disaster to Strike. If thatch buildup has become excessive in your lawn, start a corrective program. This may include mechanical removal of thatch as well as adjustments in lime and fertilizer use. Thatching machines usually have revolving knives or spring tines. The depth of thatch will dictate the type of machine to use. It's important to cut through the thatch, bring up soil and mix this with the thatch layer. "Local golf courses actually spread a soil mixture on top of golf greens to eliminate thatch layers," he says. "This may not be practical on a home lawn, but the principle applies."

Consider Using a Wetting Agent. A wetting agent such as Aqua Grow or Surfside applied at a rate of about 1/2 pint per 1,000 square feet will improve the wettability of thatch and contribute to a control program.

Finally, collecting clippings won't prevent a thatch problem. The ingredients of thatch are more likely to be roots and other residues far more resistant to decomposition than leaf clippings. Of course, says Mitchell, clippings should be removed if they're excessive, in which case the lawn will look better. Too much growth from too much fertilizer leads to too much thatch.

Goat Assn. to meet

NEWPORT — Winding River Dairy Goat Association, Perry County, will sponsor an official milking competition at the Newport Fair Grounds next Friday and Saturday. Animals entered need registration papers, clear and correct tattoos, and application fee of \$4.00 per animal. For applications and information, contact Helen Snyder, (717) 567-3554, R.D. #2, Newport.



FISHER'S PAINTING

- SAND BLASTING ■ ROOF COATING
- ALL TYPES OF PAINTING
- SIGN PAINTING ■ WATERPROOFING
- REPOINTING & RESTORATION ON BRICK & STONE HOUSES



Aerial Ladder Equipment

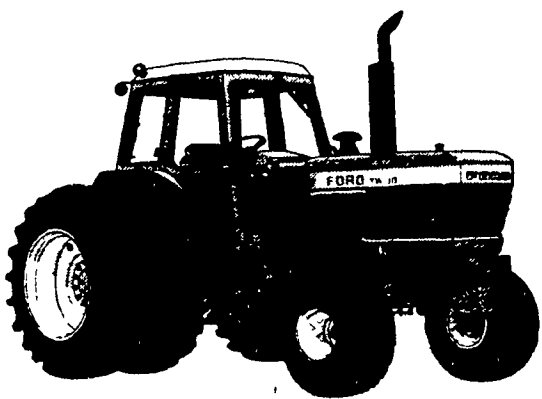
4056 A Newport Road
Kinzers, PA 17535

(Across From Pequea Valley School)

717-768-3239

Exterior Paint, Roof Coating & Accessories Sold Here

Buy a new Ford TW-10, TW-20 or TW-30 and get the Ford EXTENDED SERVICE PLAN AT NO EXTRA COST! 36-MONTH PROTECTION



Come in and make your best deal on a new 110-PTO hp Ford TW-10, 135-PTO hp TW-20 or 163-PTO TW-30. Buy and take delivery before June 30, 1983, and get—at NO EXTRA COST—the Ford Extended Service Plan. E.S.P. provides protection against unexpected repair bills on major components for 36 months or 2,500 hours of use. This Extended Service Plan has a retail value of over \$1,000.

FORD TW 20
4 WHEEL DRIVE UNIT
In Stock

***\$14,000 OFF REGULAR PRICE — ONE ONLY**

OR... MAKE NO PRINCIPAL OR INTEREST PAYMENTS UNTIL 1984! NONE! THEN GET 10 3/4% ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE FIXED-RATE FINANCING FOR UP TO 48 MONTHS!

Qualified buyers can get up to 8 months' waiver of finance charges, followed by 10 3/4% ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE financing through Ford Motor Credit Company or other participating financial institutions. New related implements are also eligible when purchased and financed with your new Ford tractor.

That means finance charges will not begin

OR... GET BIG CASH DISCOUNTS!

Factory incentive allowances mean we can now offer substantial cash discounts in lieu of the above offers. Additional discounts are available for front wheel drive option. Ask us how much you can save!

AND... NOW THERE'S AN 8 3/4% ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE FIVE-YEAR LEASE/PURCHASE PLAN!

Now, if you prefer not to buy, qualified lessees can lease any new Ford farm tractor over 30 hp from DEKALB Equipment Leasing Corporation at lease rates computed using a low 8 3/4% ANNUAL PERCENTAGE RATE. Plus get a fixed price purchase option at the time the lease is written.

Cash payments may be lower than those of

to accrue and you'll make no additional payments until January 2, 1984. And the balance of your contract has a very attractive percentage rate.

A qualifying down payment or trade-in is required. Certain restrictions apply. Physical damage and credit life insurance are not included with this special financing package.

an installment purchase contract. Leases may be written for three, four, or five year terms. Payments may be made annually, semi-annually or monthly. We'll be happy to explain the advantages this new lease plan may offer you. And, when you lease a TW-10, TW-20 or TW-30 by June 30, you'll also get the new Ford Extended Service Plan at no extra cost.

ACT SOON! Incentive offers expire June 30, 1983! See us for all of the details and restrictions.



KELLER BROS.

1921 TRACTOR CO. 1983
717-949-6501



Rt. 419 Between Schaefferstown & Cornwall, Lebanon County