

June 12, 1987

No. 165



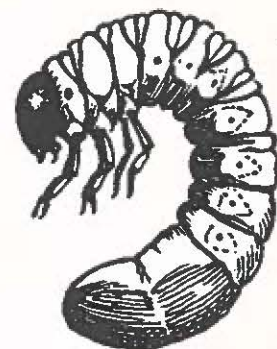
## INSECT NOTES

### MOLE CONTROL

Moles are active in home lawns this time of year--causing much concern and anguish to homeowners and Extension Agents! There are a variety of traps, poison pellets, poison gas generators, and guillotines sold for the control and/or torture of moles! No doubt some of these devices work! A common recommendation for the control of moles in a lawn is to control the white grubs. The theory behind this control strategy is that the Eastern, or common mole (Scalopus aquaticus) feeds on white grubs--and the elimination of white grubs in the lawn will deprive the moles of food, and they will leave! Sounds good!



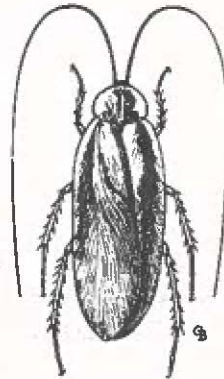
Moles feed on a variety of animals, including earthworms, slugs, and other small animals in the turf environment. Moles are insectivores, they do supplement their diet with a few seeds, but they do not eat bulbs or the roots of plants. Certainly, grubs are a part of a mole's diet when these immature beetles are common in a lawn. However, there are other things a mole can feed on as it tunnels through the soil in a lawn. Moles are commonly found in grub-free lawns! If all the grubs, earthworms, and other soil animals in a lawn are eliminated through repeated applications of insecticides, the moles probably would be forced to seek other areas to tunnel and feed. But the results would not be evident for several weeks, and the damage would likely continue and may even increase during this time! Even worse, the moles may not move far from the treated lawn, and they may periodically reinvade in search of food or mates! This may be common in lawns that are adjacent to wooded areas.



Grub control for the control of moles may be rather expensive--the cost of insecticides and application time--with little guarantee of success. The goal of insecticide applications to lawns should be the suppression of insect pest populations--not the elimination of the population. Starving out moles by trying to eliminate part of their food supply is probably not feasible or responsible (let's use pesticides wisely).

## WOOD ROACHES

Only a few of the thousands of species of cockroaches are pests in the homes and other structures of man. Most cockroaches live outdoors and are rarely seen by homeowners. Except for the "wood roach"! This cockroach is commonly encountered in homes in the spring, and frequently causes some concern among homeowners.



The wood cockroach lives outdoors in the leaf litter and debris of wooded areas. The adults of this cockroach are about 1/2 to 3/4 inch long, brown, and the outer edges of the wings are pale. The adult cockroaches are very capable flyers, and they frequently fly to lights at night--especially the warm nights of early spring and fall. The adult cockroaches are active during the spring and fall, and are frequently found in houses at this time. In the spring these insects are probably attracted to outside lights at night, in the fall the adults are probably brought into the house with firewood. In either case, this species of cockroach does not infest houses--they are simply casual or accidental invaders.

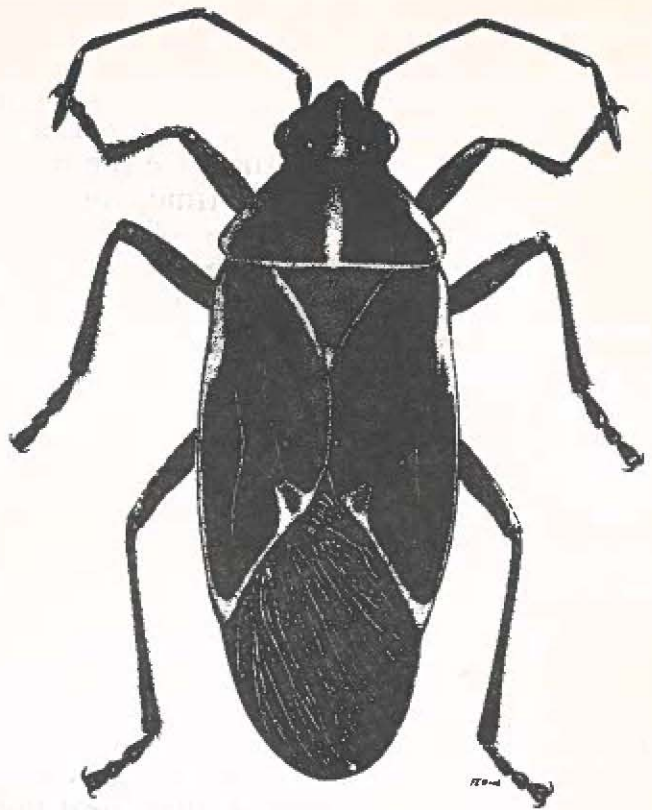
Control of these infrequent cockroaches can be achieved with a fly swatter or a nudge out the door! An aerosol insecticide can be used, if considered necessary. This insect will not take up residence in structures, so chemical control is usually not necessary.



## **BOXELDER BUGS** (help is on the way!)

Boxelder bugs are usually a pest in and around houses in the fall, and in the early spring. I don't expect Agents to be getting calls on these critters now--but I need your help at this time!

I am starting a research project on the biology, habits, and control of boxelder bugs! (I've done dumber things!) I would like to get started this spring by collecting some material from around the state, and by contacting some communities that have had serious problems. -Can you help me with this?



Please send me information on locations that you are aware of that have had serious problems with boxelder bugs. I will try to visit or contact those areas and collect some material. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Send any and all information to:

**Wm. H Robinson**  
**Department of Entomology**  
**Virginia Tech**  
**Blacksburg, VA 24061**

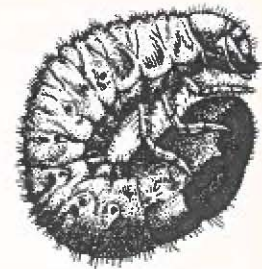
## **TURF INSECT PEST CONTROL**

Beginning in early June and extending into July is the best time to control some of the most important turf insect pests--white grubs and sod webworms.

*White Grubs.* Grubs of the Japanese beetle is probably the most common lawn and turf insect pest in Virginia. The adult beetles feed on a variety of plants and trees, but the immature stages--the grubs--feed on the roots of grass. Adult beetles emerge from the soil in June, and begin laying eggs about 2 weeks later. The eggs hatch in about 10 days, and the first



stage grubs begin feeding on tender grass roots. The best time to control this insect is when the grubs are small; they are the most responsive to insecticides at this time, and they are feeding close to the surface of the soil. A granular insecticide is probably the most effective formulation to use to control white grubs. However, liquid insecticides can be effective if the directions for use are followed carefully, and the application is "watered in" immediately. This will move the insecticide off the leaves of grass and into the soil to contact the white grubs.



*Sod Webworms.* The adults of several of the sod webworm species in Virginia will emerge in June/July. They are most active flying about the lawn at dusk. They are attracted to lights at night, and can gather in great numbers at outdoor lights. All the activity of the adults--flying over lawns at dusk, and flying to lights in the evening cause some concern to homeowners.



Frequently, there is the perception that all the adults must mean that there is a serious sod webworm problem in the lawn! That is usually not true! There can be as many as 4-5 sod webworm species in one area, but they are rarely present in sufficient numbers to seriously damage turf. If control is considered necessary, a liquid insecticide is probably the best formulation. Wait until there are few moths seen flying over the lawn (adults will be active for about 10-14 days). Cut the grass and apply the material late in the afternoon. Sod webworm caterpillars feed at night on the blades of grass, so the objective is to get the insecticide to stick to the blades and hope that a caterpillare will eat the treated grass.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Wm. H. Robinson'.

Wm. H. Robinson  
Extension Entomologist