Helminthosporium blight is caused by the fungus *Helminthosporium dictyoides*. The disease occurs most commonly on tall, meadow and creeping red fescues.

**SYMPTOMS.** - The common name of netblotch originates from the lesion pattern of development commonly associated with the disease on the more broad-leaved tall and meadow fescues. On these species, the disease appears first as short, irregular, dark-brown, transverse bars, which resemble short strands of dark thread drawn across the leaf. These bars eventually combine with short longitudinal streaks of brown tissue—producing a very finely developed network. Under conditions optimum for disease development, these net-like patterns aggregate, fusing into dark-brown, solid spots, measuring 1/4 to 1 inch long and 1/16 to 1/8 inch wide. Heavily infected leaves ultimately turn yellow and die back from the tips (see photograph).

The characteristic net pattern of the disease on tall and meadow fescues is absent on the finer-leaved red fescues. On the leaves of the latter species, the typical lesions are small, reddish-brown, irregularly shaped blotches. Leaf girdling by lesions occurs frequently, causing a yellowing and die-back from the tip.

In the warmer part of the summer, heavily diseased stands of red fescue go off color—first becoming yellow, and finally, fading into a light brown. At this time, characteristic "pockets" of dead turfgrass, ranging from 1 to 3 feet in diameter, may develop.

**DISEASE CYCLE.** - The causal organism survives the winter months in infected crowns and roots of fescue plants and in the debris of the previous year's growth. In the spring, spores are produced and carried onto the leaves by wind and splashing water. These spores then germinate and infect the leaves. On the red fescues, the early spring leaf spot phase of the disease may go unnoticed. Crown and root infection of new plants also takes place in the spring. With warmer, drier weather, the leaf lesion phase of the disease decreases, but severity of the crown and root rot phase increases. During late July and August, entire stands of fescue may be completely destroyed due to severe crown and root rot. Helminthosporium blight is often the primary cause of summer "browning" of red fescues.

**CONTROL.** - Resistant Varieties - All commonly cultivated varieties of tall, meadow and creeping red fescue appear to be equally susceptible to Helminthosporium blight.
Chemical Control - Helminthosporium blight may be controlled by the use of certain fungicides. For specific control recommendations, see Control Series 76.