

Monday, September 28, 2015

## Why is My Fescue Yellow?

Recently, I was checking and counting cattle when I noticed the fescue pasture appeared to be yellow. At first I thought this could be a reaction from an herbicide application made earlier in the summer. After noticing this off-color on another visit, I decided to take a closer look. My fescue was infected with “rust”. On closer inspection, the individual leaf blades were covered with small yellow and orange rust spores giving the grass a yellow appearance from a distance.

According to Dr. Alan Windham, UT Extension Plant Pathologist, the Rust Fungi affects fescue that has been stressed due to drought, shade or low nutrition. This makes sense because we have sure had some dry periods this summer.

While this rust doesn't cause problems for most livestock, it can cause possible respiratory problems in horses. It can also affect the palatability of the forage for livestock.

This rust fungi can also infect lawn fescue as well as ryegrass, bluegrass, and zoysiagrass. The growth of a lawn grass affected with rust would be slowed just as the forage fescue. Even though the growth rate may be affected, this rust most likely will not kill the grass stand.

The best approach to gaining control of this disease may be easier in a home lawn than in a pasture field. Good fertilization, irrigation, resistant varieties, and sunlight are important factors in controlling this rust fungi. You should water your lawn in the morning so the grass blades will dry quickly. There are several fungicides available for control of this disease. A fungicide application is most affective when applied before the occurrence of disease. By the time you notice the rust fungi, it is too late to be affective with a fungicide application. The best chance for a disease-free stand next year is good rainfall resulting in lower stress for the pasture or lawn grass.