

THE TURF TIMES



Welcome to our newsletter.

Our goal is to provide accurate, researched information to develop and maintain your ideal lawn.

Each issue contains an article written by Blue Grass staff, as well as information from university researchers and tips from area experts. **This issue contains information on how to repair lawns after winter salt and dog urine damage.**

Feel free to contact us with questions or suggestions at any time. 319-842-2165 or sarah@bgsod.com

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Dog & Salt Damage

Winter is tough on lawns

It's that time of year: when lawns wake up and... look like they may have needed *a bit* more beauty sleep. Often, the roughest-looking areas will be close to roads, driveways, or sidewalks where salt (or ice-melt) was used to keep us from ice skating through winter.

You may notice areas around trees, fire hydrants, etc, in our lawns where dogs (whether you own them or not) urinated during the winter look like the photo on the right. Internet discussion boards and YouTube videos commonly point to three causes for dog spots: **urea**, **salt crystals** and **pH**. In Iowa soils, only two of these variables are (usually) the culprits.

Urea is a naturally occurring source of nitrogen. Urea is the cause of the majority of the damage you see in the spring. In essence, you are seeing a fertilizer burn. Additionally, the **salts** in a dog's urine can contribute to the spotting, (much like the road salt mentioned above). Regarding, **pH**, Dr. Nick Christians of Iowa State University explains, "don't worry too much about pH when treating dog spots **because urine pH in healthy animals is typically very close to neutral and will have no impact on soil**".

Repairing the Damage

Fortunately, fixing salt and dog damage is easy and inexpensive by using gypsum (calcium and sulfur). Gypsum ties up the excess salts in the soil from both urine and ice-melt. Gypsum also aids in breaking up compacted soils, which increases water and nutrient absorption in the soil. Increasing water absorption decreases spring run off, increases oxygen content for healthy soils, and will help preserve vital top soil that could be washed away in spring deluges. Gypsum is a win-win-win.



Dog urine damage after the spring melt

Gypsum vs Lime?

We recommend gypsum over lime because gypsum has a neutral pH; lime is *very* alkaline and can adversely affect soil pH. Additionally, it is safe to put gypsum down with your spring feeding of 13-13-13. Your lawn will be thrilled to have a banquet of the essential-for-healthy-growth nutrients of N-P-K + Ca + Su!

Blue Grass Staff Pro Tips:

Get your mower engines serviced, oil changed and your blades sharpened this month! Mowing season is coming.

"Plant health is about more than N-P-K. Think of how unhealthy you would be if you only ate foods with Vitamin A. Living organisms are complex and so are their diets. Gypsum provides vital Calcium and Sulfur to soil and plant life. Its ability to increase air and water space in soil makes it like an aerifier in a bag. It's a win-win for plants and soils."

**Mike Loan
President, BGE**

