



Billbug (La Plata Weevil)

› **Scientific Name:** *Spenophorus brunnipennis*

› **Order:** Coleoptera

› **Susceptible Species**

- Most warm season turfgrass species, particularly Kikuyu.

› **Description**

- **Immature/larval stage:** Legless, creamy-white 'C' shaped larvae with an orange head capsule up to 10mm long.
- **Mature/adult stage:** Dark brown to black weevil, with a distinctive 'bill' like snout, and elbowed antennae. Young adults often have dark brown striping on the wing casings, bodies up to 10mm long.

› **Biology and Lifecycle**

- Billbugs deposit their eggs within the plant stem, where the larvae develop and feed on the plant. It is at this stage of development that the most severe damage is inflicted to turf grass.
- As the larvae continue to develop, they also feed on grass roots.
- Depending on location and weather conditions billbugs generally lay their eggs during October to December.
- The eggs develop into larvae after 2 weeks and immediately begin feeding as they burrow their way down through the plants to roots. These insect pupae, remain in the soil from late summer to early Autumn.
- Billbugs have a one or possibly two year life cycle and overwinter as young adults.

› **Damage**

- Visible turf injury results as larvae burrow down through the stem of the turf plant towards the crown. This destroys the stems and eventually results in the death of the plant itself. The stems of dead turf plants will have hollow stems filled with sawdust like material.
- Affected plants will initially turn yellow and may eventually turf brown and die. This can often appear similar to the symptoms of fungal diseases such as Dollar Spot. In periods of high pest pressure, large areas of turf can be killed.
- Tufts of dead plants can easily be pulled out of the ground as hollow stems break off at the crown.

Larvae



Adult



Damage



› **Management Tips**

- Billbugs can be hard to detect until damaging populations are present. Inspect areas of turf for pest presence by pulling on leaf blades. If leaves pull out easily, or if hollow stems are present then consider applying an insecticide.