

## LEATHER JACKETS

### Identification

- bare spots or thin spots on lawns in March, April or May
- insects commonly known as "Daddy Long Legs", flying near your turf or gathering on walls
- maggots in your turf that are leathery and grey/brown

If you have seen these symptoms or insects, the European crane fly is probably living in your turf. These pests can appear in grass, which has otherwise been free of them.

### General Information

The European crane fly, or leather jacket, is an insect that can damage your turf. All insects have several life stages, and they can look very different. For example, the leather jacket is a maggot at one time during the year and a flying insect ("Daddy Long Legs") at another.

As you start to mow your lawn in the spring (March-April), the maggots of the crane fly are feeding on your turf. In general, they stay underground in the day and move up to the turf leaves in the night. They are very sensitive to drying, and do not survive if they are dried out when heated up by the sun. On very cloudy days when the turf is wet, you can see the larvae in the turf. They are about 25mm long and have a grey/brown leathery skin.

They will feed on your turf for several months (March-June) and then migrate into the ground, where they change into a crane fly. The crane flies emerge from the turf and fly about, sometimes gathering in groups on walls near the turf. In fact, they are laying eggs to produce more crane flies. Because the crane fly maggots feed on your turf roots, they can weaken the turf, causing it to grow poorly, thin out, and even die, leaving bare spots.

### Treatment

1. Water your lawn lightly in the evening. Cover it with black polythene sheeting. Bin liners are fine. The larvae will be attracted to the wet, dark surface and won't be aware of the dawn. In the early morning, remove the black polythene sheet. Many of the larvae will be caught on the surface. You can let the birds do the removal job for you or rake them off.

Or 2. Or go to the opposite extreme. When the maggots are feeding in your turf, water your turf less. The turf can be dried out quite a bit before it will suffer, but the maggots need to be wet to survive.