

Two clubs in South Florida have been sued for not protecting their members from the painful — and sometimes fatal — bite of this unwelcome immigrant.

FIRE ANTS

BY ROBIN GOODELL

DELRAY BEACH — Recently, two country clubs in South Florida have been sued by golfers and tennis players after being stung by fire ants.

In one case, the victim has sued for damages due to pain and suffering. In the second case, the victim's *survivors* have sued, claiming their relative's death might have been prevented if the club had controlled the fire ants or posted a warning about them.

The toxic venom produced by the ants induces an allergic reaction in all people, ranging from mild itching to burning to death.

Fire ants have the potential to become a far greater insect pest to golf courses, recreation and lawn areas than mole crickets or grubs have ever become.

Legal liability for fire-ant bites is becoming an ever-increasingly important factor as the exotic pest becomes more difficult to eradicate.

The extent to which a property owner can be held liable for the sting of a transient, venomous insect has yet to be established in the courts, but it soon will be. And no matter what precedent is set, undoubtedly it will continue to be litigated.

And, in the meantime, fire ants are here to stay. Our best defense as recreational area managers is the education of the users and our staffs. We must be sure to imple-

ment (and document!) aggressive control programs, using measures recommended by state and federal agricultural agencies.

Here are six things a golf course manager can do:

1. Keep records of pesticides purchased and how they are used to show the intent to control the pest.

2. Key personnel should always carry a pound or two of a fire-ant killer such as Amdro so mounds can be treated as soon as spotted.

3. The manager of the facility should set up an information station in a conspicuous place to educate users of the facility on what to do in case of an attack by fire ants.

4. First aid kits should be readily available. These kits should contain a plentiful supply of over-the-counter insect sting treatments.

5. Any person known to have a history of allergic reactions to insects should be advised to consult his physician about carrying a sting bite kit.

6. The pro shop, main office and information center all should have the addresses and telephone numbers of the nearest emergency room, the nearest doctor's office or clinic, and the nearest paramedic station.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Robin Goodell is superintendent of Hamlet CC in Delray Beach and a member of the Palm Beach GCSA.*



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