

Growing fire ant problem increases need

Industry researchers responding to problem

By Peter Blais

The golf industry let out a collective sigh of relief this winter when a Florida jury ruled The PGA National Golf Resort in West Palm Beach was not responsible for the death of a golfer who was bitten on the course by fire ants.

But in this litigious age, it's a pretty safe bet a similar case will eventually find its way to the

nation's courts. And this time, the golf industry may not be able to dodge the bullet.

That's why the search continues for ways to control fire ants.

"They're going to continue to be a problem unless someone comes up with a new product that completely eradicates them," said Palm Beach (Fla.) National Golf & Country Club superintendent Mark Jarrell.

That product hasn't been developed yet and isn't likely to in the near future, according to Russ

Mitchell, assistant sales manager for golf courses with Woodbury Chemical Co. in Florida.

The problem is the adaptability of the fire ant. Since first arriving from Brazil aboard a ship that docked in Mobile, Ala., 40 years ago, fire ants have spread into 13 states throughout the Southeast and South Central United States. They have been reported as far west as California and north as Pennsylvania.

Fire ants have inexplicably evolved from single-queen into multiple-queen colonies in recent years. Some colonies have as many as 200 queens with super colonies having more than 500 mounds per acre.

Fire ant stings raise blisters on most people. Insect bites result in as many as 85,000 allergic reactions annually requiring medical treatment and caused 30 deaths last year.

"A 32-year-old woman died here

in November from a single bite," said Paul Flanders, head of marketing for West Palm Beach Fla.-based Universal Industries, manufacturers of Coleman Instant Fire Ant Killer.

The insect can sting repeatedly without damaging itself. The sting releases a chemical that attracts other fire ants and causes them to overwhelm a victim. A dog pushed a 16-month-old Pensacola, Fla., girl onto a mound three years

An exclusive Golf Course News survey:

Company	Product name	Mode of application	Time to control	Level of control
American Cyanamid One Cyanamid Plaza Wayne, N.J. 07470 Wayne Iftner 201-831-3573 Circle #301	AMDRO	Broadcast bait	7-14 dys	99+%
Ciba-Geigy P.O. Box 18300 Greensboro, N.C. 27249 Scott Moffitt 919-547-1154 Circle #302	Logic Triumph	Broadcast bait Broadcast contact & ingested	7-14 dys 2-3 dys	90% 94%
DowElanco 9002 Purdue Rd. Indianapolis, Ind. 46268 Gary Johnson 800-352-6776 Circle #303	Dursban 50W Dursban Turf Insect.	Broadcast & mound Broadcast & mound	7 dys 7 dys	100% 100%
Mobay Specialty Products Box 4913 Hawthorn Rd. Kansas City, Mo. 64120 Doug Soper 800-842-8020 Circle #304	Oftanol 2 Insect. Oftanol 5% Granular	Broadcast & mound Broadcast bait	1 dy 1 dy	80-100% 80-100%
NOR-AM Chemical Co. 3509 Silverside Rd. Wilmington, Del. 19801 George Raymond 302-575-2030 Circle #305	TURCAM WP	Mound treatment	1-2 dys	100%
Rhone-Poulenc 2 T.W. Alexander Dr. Research Triangle Park, N.C. Jack Boyne 919-549-2000 Circle #306	SEVIN, CHIPCO, SEVIMOL	Mound treatment	N/A	80-90%
Universal Industries 1253 Old Okeechobee Rd. West Palm Beach, Fla. 33401 Paul Flanders 800-512-3259 Circle #307	Coleman's Fire Ant Killer	Mound treatment	Immediate	100%
Valent USA P.O. Box 8025 Walnut Creek, Calif. Darrell Kelso 415-256-2730 Circle #308	Orthene	Mound treatment	2 dys	100%
W.A. Cleary Chemical Corp. 1049 Somerset St. Somerset, N.J. 08873 Bron Zienkiewicz 908-247-8000 Circle #309	Cleary's SEVIN	Broadcast & mound treatment	N/A	90%

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for effective controls across the South

ago. The ants stung her hundreds of times and she died of anaphylactic shock.

"I won't take my kids fishing or camping anymore," said Jim Moore, director of the United States Green Section's Mid-Continent Region in Waco, Texas. "If you're in bed, they can cover your feet and ankles in seconds."

While fire ants are a severe problem in the wild and on farms in Texas, golf course superintendents

seem "to be right on top of the problem," Moore said.

"Members sometimes help out by taking shakers with them and applying the pesticides to mounds they find. You have to stay right on top of it. Otherwise you'll need a broad-scale application that costs a lot of money and tends to scare people."

Fire ants are attracted by electrical current and have shorted out telephone and power equipment

by getting into the equipment and eating the insulation.

Mitchell said the most effective control seems to be a combination of different pesticides — an individual mound treatment that physically kills the ants, combined with broadcast contact pesticides and broadcast baits.

The contact pesticides control or kill the insects, Mitchell said. Worker ants take the baits back to the mounds where they steril-

ize or kill the queen, Mitchell added.

Somewhere near 90 percent control is about the best one can hope for, Jarrell and Mitchell agreed.

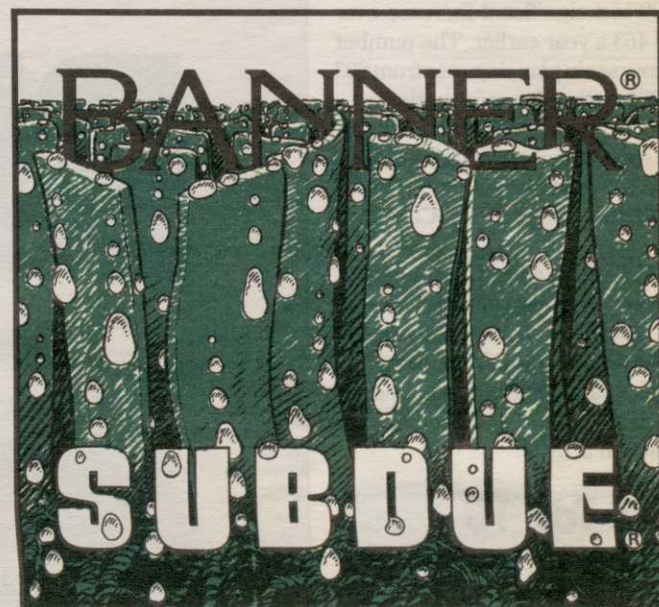
Mound applications can permanently eliminate ants from that particular mound. But they won't permanently discourage ants from returning to that area, said Darrell Kelso, national products manager for Valent USA, manufacturers of Orthene.

At least twice a year, new queens and male ants come out of their mounds. They can fly as high as 500 feet and as far as 15 miles. A queen, who can lay as many as 1,500 eggs a day, may land near a treated mound, burrow into the ground and start a new colony.

The old mound may have been controlled. But when a superintendent returns to a treated area and finds new mounds just a week later, he may not perceive that as permanent control, Kelso said.

Products manufactured to fight fire ants

Duration of control	Cost/acre	Formulation	Precautionary statement
70 dys	\$7/acre	Granules	Caution
Several wks Several wks	Variable Variable	Granules Liquid	Caution Warning
2-3 wks 2-3 wks	\$20-25/acre \$20-25/acre	Liquid Liquid	Warning Warning
30+ dys 30+ dys	\$70/acre \$74/acre	Liquid Granules	Warning Caution
N/A	\$2/acre	Liquid	Warning
14 dys	\$0.15-0.25/mound	Liquid, WP, Granular	Caution
Permanent	\$0.27/mound	Liquid	Warning
Permanent	\$0.10/mound	Powder	Caution
10 dys	N/A	Granular	Caution



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