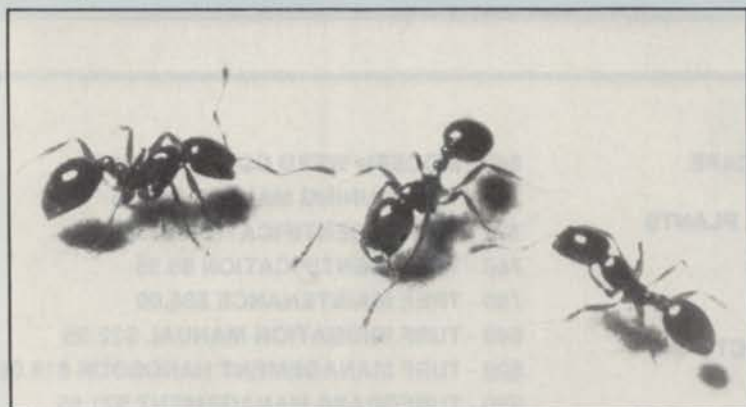


Fire ant spread continues, millions bitten monthly

The imported red fire ant reportedly bites more than 2.5 million Americans each month. Its painful bite makes this insect the nuisance pest of the 80's.



Imported red fire ants.

Both black and red imported fire ants entered the U.S. from South America in 1918 through the port of Mobile, AL. The black version hasn't been nearly as successful in spreading across the South as its cousin has. The red imported fire ant reached Texas in 1953 and currently occupies portions of Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. Experts expect the pest to find its way to the humid portions of California and Ari-

zona during this decade.

According to Ricks Plueneke in Fort Worth, TX, red fire ant mounds range from small to two-feet in height and two or more feet wide.

Farmers have reported as many as 200 mounds per acre of pasture.

The ants construct a network of tunnels and chambers in the mound and in the soil beneath the mound. They move to the most comfortable portion of the den with changes in temperature and moisture. "Extremely wet weather is a good time to treat because the ants come out of the ground to work on the mound," says Dr. Craig Sheppard, research entomologist for the Coastal Plain Experiment Station, Tifton, GA. "The ants are

harder to control in extremely hot, dry weather or in the middle of a summer day, because they are deeper in the ground at these times."

Baits, drenches and fumigants have been tried to control the ants. Baits are effective during warm days when the ants are actively feeding. American Cyanamid developed the bait Amdro specifically for the fire ant.

Drenches are useful at any time. Plueneke recommends five gallons of insecticide solution per mound, making sure to flood all tunnels and chambers.

Most soil insecticides can be used for drenches, including Dursban, Orthene, Oftanol, Diazinon, Mocap and others. Orthene 75S, for example, is mixed with water at the rate of one ounce in five gallons of water. Ortho recommends a four-foot diameter area around the mound be soaked as well as the mound. Disruptions to the mound should be avoided or the ants will attempt to hide the queen, says Sheppard.

A combination of controls on a regular basis may be needed to prevent reinvansion from adjacent untreated areas. □

mowing of golf course greens. These adults begin laying eggs in early May, or about the time Vanhoutte spirea first comes into bloom.

Application of Oftanol® during April or May has successfully prevented larval infestations during the summer. Diazinon (5.5 lbs. AI/acre) applied to fairways when Vanhoutte spirea first

comes into bloom, kills egg-laying adults and also prevents the development of summer larval infestations.

Sod webworm—Overwintered larvae of the sod webworm begin feeding as soon as the grass begins to grow. Usually damage is insignificant, but areas which do not green-up may be infested. These areas frequently have probe

marks from starlings who feed on the larvae.

When necessary, a wide range of insecticides including Diazinon, Dursban®, Proxol®, Aspon, Sevin® (carbaryl) and others applied at labelled rates may be used to obtain control.

Black Cutworms—Moths of the black cutworm begin laying eggs