

Fire Ant Trails:

News from the Texas Imported Fire Ant Research & Management Plan

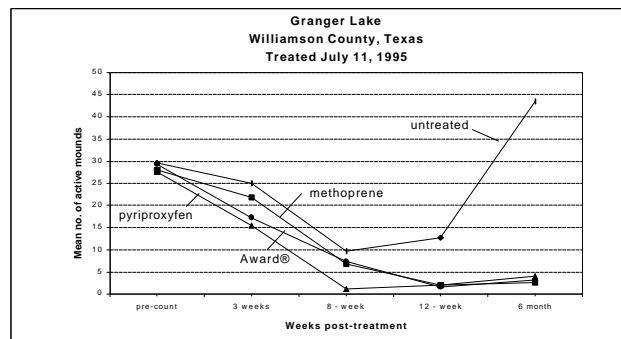
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New Fire Ant Bait Products to be Introduced in 1999 - Bastiaan M. Drees, Fire Ant Project Coordinator and Charles Barr, Extension Program Specialist, Fire Ant Project, IPM Research

Two new fire ant baits, Extinguish® (methoprene) by Wellmark International and Distance® (pyriproxyfen) by Valent USA, are to be introduced early in 1999. Both products contain active ingredients that act as mimics of the insect hormone (Juvenile Hormone or JH).

Trials conducted to evaluate the methoprene fire ant bait, Extinguish®, were initiated in 1992 in Montgomery County and in 1993 in Williamson County. Additional trials, were conducted in 1995 and 1996 (not shown here) with methoprene and pyriproxyfen (Distance®).

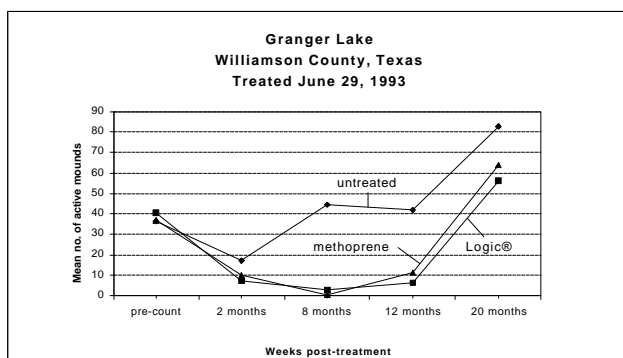
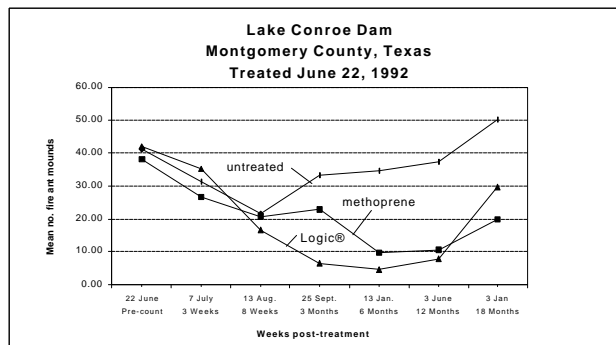


Both products control imported fire ants in a manner similar to the Insect Growth Regulator (IGR) products, Logic® and Award® containing fenoxycarb, currently on the market.

Extinguish® and Distance® are both formulated and applied as a conventional bait products and broadcast at a rate of 1 to 1.5 pounds products per acre.

Extinguish® is registered for use on turfgrass and landscapes, parks, zoos, golf courses, roadsides, airports, cemeteries, perimeter areas of buildings, homes, sheds, electrical and phone boxes, pump houses and other associated areas, forestry sites, commercial nurseries including field-grown and container stock, school grounds, sports fields, pastures, rangeland, citrus groves, sod farms, cropland.

Distance® is registered for use on indoor and outdoor container and field grown ornamentals (commercial nurseries), ornamental tree farms, non-bearing nut, citrus, and other tree fruits grown in nurseries, conifers, conifer nurseries, sod farms, industrial sites, uncultivated non-agricultural areas, non-grazed pastures and non-grazed rangeland.



Fire Ant Management Pilot Showcase Programs Underway Across Texas

Charles L. Barr, Extension Program Specialist, Fire Ant Project, IPM Research

A “showcase” program was established at the **HUD Housing Authority in Mt. Pleasant** (NE Texas) during Fire Ant Awareness Week, September 14 through 20, 1998. A press conference was held the day of treatment (Sept. 17) at which Rep. Tom Ramsay, legislative sponsor of the Fire Ant Plan, and others addressed a crowd of over 60 people, including several County Extension Agents and out-of-town residents. Several other HUD facilities have subsequently contacted us for information and programs.

In addition, community-wide fire ant management programs and result demonstrations have received assistance to become established with local County Agents in Franklin Co. (Mt. Vernon), and Marion Co. (Jefferson). In cooperation with the County Agent of Bowie Co. (Texarkana) and a County Commissioner-elect, a county-specific fire ant management program was developed and adopted by their Commissioner’s Court.

Bexar County - Nathan L. Riggs, Extension Agent-IPM (Fire Ants)

The **Oxbow Neighborhood Association** in San Antonio learned about community-wide fire ant programs in a February ’98 presentation and decided to take action. Almost 50 percent, or 495 out 1000 homes participated in the program. The Oxbow group planned to purchase PT-370 Ascend® Fire Ant Bait, but the San Antonio Pest Control Association donated the bait at the last minute. Volunteers from the San Antonio Pest Control Association and the Green Brigade Program assisted the Oxbow group by broadcasting bait over common areas, parks and homes in the neighborhood. The Green Brigade Program is an Extension Service program designed to involve first-offender teens in city landscape and gardening projects as a way

to “work off” restitution for their crimes.

Soon after the Oxbow Fire Ant Day, the **Northchase Homeowner Association** also decided to hold a neighborhood Fire Ant Day after an Extension Service presentation. In a show of neighborhood solidarity, the Oxbow neighborhood group donated 25 pounds of bait they had left over to the Northchase group for their program. The Northchase group had 49 of 114 homes participate. Northchase Homeowner Association president, Richard Meneses, said, “The neighborhood has never participated in something with as much enthusiasm and involvement as this Fire Ant Day”.

The **Encino Park Homeowner Association** requested a neighborhood do-it-yourself “kit” to help establish their community-wide fire ant management program. They scheduled their Fire Ant Day in late August, but tropical storm Charley rained on their parade! They reportedly postponed their attack on fire ants for a week and had good participation at that time.

The **Jade Oaks Homeowner Association**, in northwest San Antonio, was so excited about beginning a community fire ant program that they called the Bexar County Extension office and asked for guidance about starting their program. The real estate office for Jade Oaks promotes their newly initiated community fire ant program as a selling point for prospective home buyers!

Jade Oaks agreed to be the **showcase pilot program** in Bexar County for 1998-1999. A biological survey in 15 of 91 front lawns revealed imported fire ants in every lawn with three other species of ants present in much fewer numbers. Bret Royal, Developmental Representative with American Cyanamid donated Amdro® Insecticide Bait to treat common areas and vacant lots, and promotional “Block Party” materials. Interest and involvement was high, with 81 of 91 homeowners participating. The association members will receive a comprehensive survey requesting

information on past history, insecticide use, and other impacts imported fire ants have had before and after program initiation.

Harris County - Pam K. Traylor, EA - IPM (Fire Ant Project)

The community of **Belleau Woods Community Park** in Humble organized a group of volunteers to treat their 7-acre community park on Sept. 22, 1998. Prior to the treatment, ant mound numbers were estimated and baited vials were used to monitor ant species present. Before treatment, the park harbored about 270 imported fire ant mounds per acre. No other ant species were collected. The community had their annual picnic at the park in late October and no one was stung by a fire ant! Post-treatment ant surveys will be conducted to document the control of fire ants in this park.

An educational program for the **North Houston Heights** community in August resulted in plans for a community-wide fire ant management program initiated on October 3. Prior to the treatment, ant mound numbers were estimated and ant species were monitored using baited vials. Twelve lots were randomly selected to monitor ants. Each lot had from 1 to 20 ant mounds. Red imported fire ants were present in every lot, and only two other ant species were detected. Volunteers from the homeowners association and the Extension Service treated over 90 percent of the lots in about three hours. Ant population levels will be monitored periodically to document the effectiveness of the treatment.

The **Copperbrook Homeowners Association** has initiated their own community-wide fire ant management project. They have had two fire ant days this year, with homeowners treating the ants with whatever they had on hand. A neighborhood "kit" was mailed to them earlier this year with information. Next spring, an educational program will be given and the Two-Step Method for fire ant control will be implemented in this community.

Travis and Williamson Counties - Lisa Lennon, Extension Agent-IPM (Fire Ants)

Sun City– Georgetown, a retirement community consisting of approximately 3,000 residents battle fire ants by having their Landscape Director and Golf Course Superintendent announce when their areas will be treated. During these designated "Fire Ant Weeks" residents are encouraged to treat their lawns for fire ants using a bait product. In the spring, the Extension Service presented a program on the benefits of community-wide fire ant management and provided publications and handouts. This fall, news articles were released stressing the importance of fall treatment to produce fewer fire ants by next spring. An educational presentation was also made at their Garden Club's meeting.

Following an initial contact through a survey, the **City of Lago Vista** contacted the Extension Service about the concept of doing a *city-wide* fire ant management program. The Extension Service initially gave a brief presentation to the city council at the request of the mayor. As a result, they designated a 'fire ant weekend' and posted announcements in the local newspaper several weeks ahead using material supplied by the Extension Service. It was encouraged that all residents purchase Amdro® and broadcast on that weekend. The progress of this program is being monitored.

During "Fire Ant Awareness Week" a pro-active citizen of **Mountain City, Texas** (a residential subdivision south of Austin in Hays Co.) contacted the Extension Service about doing a fire ant management program. The city council passed a resolution calling for homeowners and landowners to participate in a city-wide effort to combat fire ants by purchasing Amdro® fire ant bait and broadcasting it on Saturday, Oct. 3rd. A Hays High School Booster Club bought hand spreaders and Amdro® for use as a fund raiser and convenience to the residents.

Coupled with product donations,

reduced purchase costs from Lowe's and Wal-Mart and rebate coupons furnished by Bret Royal, Development Rep. for American Cyanamid, participation was above average.

The Extension Service provided fact sheets, handouts and method demonstrations to residents who were not familiar with broadcasting a bait. A television crew taped the event and propagated added publicity. They are planning a spring 'fire ant day' that promises to be bigger and better.

A Board of Directors Member of the **Mt. Bonnell Shores/Colorado Crossing Homeowner Association** contacted the Extension Service following an informational letter sent out regarding fire ant management. She was interested in the community-wide management program, but needed additional information regarding native ants. A meeting was arranged to meet with her and the Extension Agent, to determine types of management, areas, and compliance issues. The Association is very organized and every homeowner is required to be a member. The neighborhood is comprised of 131 homeowners and is divided into five 'neighborhood watch' groups. Each group has a block captain, which makes distribution of information and communication easy. The block captains are Board members and utilizing the Extension Services' fire ant management program had previously been discussed.

Mt. Bonnell Shores Homeowner Association has been designated as a as the **pilot showcase program** for Travis County. Fire ant mound numbers were estimated in early October from random-selected yards, followed by obtaining ant samples using baited vials to determine infestation and ant species present. Flyers were sent out and distributed to each homeowner explaining the program and a date set for treatment. Since the Extension Service is using the neighborhood as an enhanced Result Demonstration, baits were donated for use as test trials in each block. Block captains distributed enough bait to each participant to treat their property. Volunteers treated yards that owners were

not able to treat. Survey questionnaires were also passed out to each participant.

Of the 134 lots possible (not counting untreated "control" lots), 119 were treated for a participation rate of 88.8 percent. Charts have been developed to show ant distribution by species, lots treated, and an aerial photo will allow digitization of data.

Dallas and Tarrant Counties- Scott A. Russell, Extension Agent-IPM (Fire Ants)

The **State Fair of Texas** was a big event for the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. More than 52 volunteers were trained in fire ant biology and management options. Volunteers were also given an overview of the Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Plan. These individuals manned the fire ant booth and display at the State Fair from September 25 through October 18, 1998. They answered questions about fire control, the ant's origins, ongoing research and politics (to the best of their abilities). Over 7,600 handouts and publications were given to booth visitors.

During the day on October 9, the Texas Department of Agriculture hosted "Fire Ant Day" in the Food and Fiber Pavilion. On this day the Extension Service made presentations about fire control, involving adults and children, and using questions to interact with the audiences. Feedback from the volunteers has been positive and participation in the state fair will be a regular event.

During "Fire Ant Awareness Week", an appearance was made on the FOX- 4 "Insights" program. This interview launched the weeks activities in Dallas and Tarrant Counties and generated an increased volume of telephone calls requesting community-wide management kits and presentations. Fort Worth Community Cable aired a pre-recorded program in which Extension staff discussed fire ant biology and control. The **City of Duncanville** sponsored a community meeting during fire ant awareness week.

This community meeting has resulted in the production of a Community-Wide Fire Ant Management video by the Duncanville Community Cable in cooperation with Extension Agent.

Result demonstrations have been established in Tarrant County, including one at the Northeast sub-courthouse and another in a pasture to reduce fire ant populations while preserving native red harvester ants.

Since March 1998, 26 community-wide fire ant management presentations have been made to neighborhood associations, crime watch units and civic clubs. The **Singing Hills/Hidden Valley Neighborhood Association** is working with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and the City of Dallas Parks and Recreation Department to implement a community-wide project next spring. This group will likely serve as a **showcase pilot project** in Dallas county.

According to both the Structural Pest Control Board and the Texas Department of Agriculture, there is not a problem with reselling a fire ant bait product *in the original package* size (i.e., reselling the product as a fund-raiser by a volunteer or non-profit group). However, it is illegal to purchase a certain package size, repackage the product, and then resell it (Bret E. Royal, American Cyanamid, personal communications, 25 Sept. 1998).

New Fact Sheets Available on Web Site and Print-on-demand

Four new Fire Ant Plan Fact Sheets (FAPFS) have been released on the web site, fireant.tamu.edu. These publications are also available as hard copies through the print-on-demand system at the Print Shop.

(#012) A Review of "Organic" and Other Non-Traditional Methods for Fire Ant Control 8 pp, 10/98

(#016) Managing Fire Ants in Texas Schoolyard and Butterfly Gardens, 2 pp, 10/98

(#017) Fire Ant Management Options for Golf Courses, 4 pp, 10/98

(#018) Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Project Covenant Not to Sue and Agreement to Hold Harmless 2 pp, 10/98

If you need multiple copies of these fact sheets, you can 1) download them from the web site and make copies; 2) get a copy-ready copy from this office and make your own copies; or 3) contact this office to request a reasonable number of copies for use as handouts. When requesting multiple copies, contact Anna Kjolen (409/845-5878) well in advance of the scheduled event since some time will be needed to fill the order.

Web Site Hits Exceeded 100,000 in September 1998!

In September, the web site, fireant.tamu.edu, developed by Agricultural Communications, was transferred to the Department of Entomology before Fire Ant Awareness Week.

Prepared by: **Bastiaan "Bart" M. Drees**,
Fire Ant Project Coordinator

Department of Entomology
412 Minnie Belle Heep Bldg.
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas 77843-2475
409/845-5878; FAX: 409/845-7029
b-drees@tamu.edu
<http://fireant.tamu.edu>

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