



Fire Ant UPDATE: News from the

Texas Applied Fire Ant Research and Education Program

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Phorid Flies Established and Expanding Range at Sites in Texas - Charles L. Barr, Extension Program Specialist

Below is a link to an image of the most recent phorid survey at Five Eagle Ranch near Caldwell, Texas. It was probably our last day with temperatures in the 80's for a long time so I took advantage of it to see just how far the phorids had expanded at the USDA Area-wide Fire Ant Suppression Program site in Burleson County before the winter. I was hoping for half a mile radius. Much to my surprise and delight, it appears that the heavy infestation, recovery times less than 5 minutes with multiple flies, is closer to a kilometer in radius, with recoveries of one or two flies out as far as 3 km. Around the immediate release site, it is typical for 10 - 15 flies to appear over ants in a mound "zapped" with a modified cattle prod in less than 5 minutes. Surprisingly, the only negative mound of 28 disturbed was in the far SE corner, near the creek, where we fully expected to find many flies. I basically sampled to the east, west and south boundaries in the southern part of this 2,800 acre property. Needless to say, the flies have probably crossed the fences!

- See distribution map - graphic by A. Calixto ([Phorids 11-12-03.gif](#))
- See image showing detection of phorid flies on fire ant mounds - photograph by A. Calixto ([Detecting.jpg](#))
- See image of phorid fly attracted to modified cattle prod - ([Phorid.jpg](#))

For reference, we made our first release in May 2002, the second of the Formosan biotype in May 2003. As usual, many thanks to Alejandro Calixto for downloading the GPS, overlaying the data points on the aerial images and using the GIS to calculate distances. As a side note, I spoke to Glen Rutherford, the manager, and he said a guy helping him repair the bridge near the release site on Monday kicked over a large mound by accident. A few minutes later, he asked if those were the flies that had been mentioned in the local newspaper. Glen said there must have been 50 flies over the ants.

Dr. Larry Gilbert at the University of Texas has also reported flies expanding 2 to 3.5 miles from each of about four release sites, and they are as abundant or more so away from the original release site. So, it looks like rainfall patterns are the key since sites newly established in spring '02 have done as well as old sites with low but persistent levels of phorid activity in July -02.

Fire Ants in the News

- Unwanted guest - Decades after their invasion of the U.S., Brazilian fire ants are a costly menace, by Barry Shlachter, Star-Telegram Staff Writer

- (<http://www.dfw.com/mld/dfw/business/local/7057842.htm>)
- Management of Fire Ants Possible Using Multiple Techniques (<http://sago.tamu.edu/AMSNEWS>)
- Parasitic Flies of Fire Ants Being Released in Polk County (<http://agnews.tamu.edu/>)
- News of the Area-Wide Suppression of Fire Ants program - Summer 2003 (<http://fireant.ifas.ufl.edu/index.htm>)

Final Report of The Scripps Howard Poll Fire Ant Study Now Available - Mike Merchant, Urban Entomologist

The [Fire Ant Study](#) was conducted by the Scripps Howard Poll for the Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A&M University, and released in September, 2003.

New web site for USDA-APHIS Imported Fire Ant Lab in Gulfport, Mississippi (<http://www.cphst.org/pages/IFA IPL/>)

Extinguish® Fire Ant Bait (methoprene) now an approved treatment for the USDA Imported Fire Ant Quarantine (Federal Register 68 (199):59307-8) - information provided by Anne-Marie Callcott, USDA-APHIS, Gulfport, MS, and Charles L. Brown, Imported Fire Ant Quarantine Program Manager

This final rule (See [methoprenefinalrule.pdf](#)) adds methoprene (Extinguish) to the list of approved treatments for the Imported Fire Ant Quarantine **effective Nov. 14, 2003.**

Justice® Fire Ant Bait Product No longer Being Marketed by Range and Pasture Group - information provided by Chris Wooley, Product Marketing Manager, Turf, Ornamental & Technical Products, Dow AgroSciences LLC, and Gary D. Thompson, Dow AgroSciences LLC

In the Turf, Ornamental and Technical Products group we are currently marketing Conserve® Professional Fire Ant Bait to customers such as Greenlight for this coming year. Other formulators market the Conserve Fire Ant Bait product under other trade names of their own.

Earlier, there was a routine stop-sale recall of some older Justice® material. There is currently none in the supply chain and we may change the distribution and packaging in the near future. Dow AgroSciences did, however, receive a major label revision from the EPA this spring which included most food crops and the organic status recognition which is ready to go on the next production run when and if it occurs.

Spinosad based baits should be readily available. Products today include the following and there may be one or two others in the future.

Fire Ant Control

Ortho® Fire Ant Bait - Most places lawn and garden products are sold

Fertilome® Come and Get It - Independent Lawn, Nursery and Hardware Stores

Payback® - Southern Ag.

GRANT'S KILLS TOTAL ANT KILLER BAIT (GRANT LABORATORIES, INC.) -

Information from Terry Mitchell, Texas Department of Entomology and Don M. Grosman, Service Coordinator, WGFP MC & Entomologist III, Texas Forest Service

The pesticide product, Grant's Kills Total Ant Killer Bait (EPA Reg. No. 73342-2-1663, www.grants-info.com) is a sub-registered product from Amdro Insecticide Ant Bait (active ingredient, hydramethylnon), EPA Reg. No. 73342-2, made by Ambrands out of Atlanta Georgia. It was registered in Texas in December of 1992. It is registered for the control of various insects such as acrobat ants, Argentine ants, bigheaded ants, carpenter ants, cornfield ants, crazy ants, field ants, **fire ants**, ghost ants, harvester ants, odorous house ants, pavement ants, pharoah ants, Texas leafcutting ants and thief ants. According to Mel Garbett representing Grant' Laboratories, Inc., the Grant's Total Ant Killer Bait is the same formulation as the old Amdro® Leafcutter Ant Bait.

New Ant Species found in Texas - information provided by Dr. Jerry Cook, Dept. Biological Sciences, Sam Houston State University

A homeowner in Round Rock, Texas submitted a sample of ants in alcohol for identification. Her professional pest control service company had been unable to control this ant using conventional surface and dust treatments. The species was identified as *Tetramorium caldarium*, which is a tramp ant species not yet reported from Texas. With this addition, there are 292 known species of Texas ants! They are a common minor pest in Florida and are found throughout the world, but probably originated in Africa. There is not much information about the biology and control of these ants. However, as a group, *Tetramorium* species will eat about anything (e.g., proteins, sweets), and they are predators of other insects). They appear to "catch on" (detect the presence of toxins) and leave baits alone. Likewise, when some start to die, they tend to stay away from areas of contact poisons. These traits make them hard to control.

Extension Program Specialist position in fire ants available in Dallas

(<http://GreatJobs.tamu.edu>)

Lay Off the Ants! (from Best Friends Magazine, Sept./Oct. 2003)

Germany has introduced a new law making it illegal to kill ants. "A force of 85 ant protection officers has been sworn in to protect the insects. Homeowners and gardeners who attempt to destroy an ant hill or underground nest will be smacked with stiff penalties if caught. They now need a permit to have ants on their property carefully removed to nearby woodlands."

Fire Ant Research & Management Program Receives National IPM Award

The Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Team was selected as the first recipient of the **Integrated Pest Management Team Award** sponsored by Dow AgroSciences and presented by the Entomological Foundation of the Entomological Society of America (<http://www.entfdn.org/Recognition.html#Integrated>). The Texas Imported Fire Ant Research and Management Plan, established by Bill Number TX74RHB 2341 (May 12, 1995), was funded by the Texas legislature in 1997, providing \$2.5 million per year to support research, regulatory, and education programs designed to eliminate the red imported fire ant as a pest of major economic and health significance.

The initiative involved all state agencies addressing the fire ant problem, including the Texas A&M University System's Texas Agricultural Experiment Station (the lead agency, represented by **Dr. Ray Frisbie** and **Dr. S. Bradleigh Vinson**), Texas Cooperative Extension (formerly the Texas Agricultural Extension Service represented by **Bastiaan M. Drees**), Texas Tech University (represented by **Dr. Harlan Thorvilson**), the University of Texas (represented by **Dr. Larry Gilbert**) and the Texas Department of Agriculture (represented by **David Kostroun**). A 12-member committee (represented by **Mark Forgason**) including three members appointed by the Governor, directs, advises and assists the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in administering the fire ant research program under Section 77.022, Agricultural Code.

In addition, this committee included representation from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Texas and Southwest Cattle Raisers Association, Public Utility Commission of Texas, Structural Pest Control Board and Texas Oil and Gas Association and advisors from the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association, Texas Wildlife Association and Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society. The project collaborated heavily with representatives from private industries to develop new fire ant control products, including **Doug VanGundy** with Wellmark International that resulted in the marketing Extinguish® (s-methoprene).



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