

# SAFETY SENSE

## Fire Ants are Hot Pest to Avoid

(NAPSA)—While most people view ants as harmless nuisances at picnics and outdoor activities, fire ants are dangerous pests that can cause serious harm to you and your family.

Fire ants, the reddish-brown ant species named for their painful sting, inhabit warmer-weather areas, especially in Southern states from South Carolina to California. Red imported fire ants are the most aggressive type, as they often attack and sting living things they perceive as food or a threat.

All ants, including fire ants, have unique social behaviors and communication methods. Once ants find food or spot an incoming intruder, they release chemicals called trail pheromones, to lead nest mates to food, or alarm pheromones, to signal their nest mates to defend their colony by repeatedly stinging intruding insects, ground-nesting birds, humans and other wildlife.

“Fire ants can be fiercely territorial if they believe their nest is being threatened. Fire ant colonies with multiple queens can grow very large, so it’s important to be on the lookout for these pests and know how to treat their stings,” says Orkin, Inc. entomologist Shane Hill.

On humans, fire ant stings typically cause small blisters that itch and burn and are prone to infection. For the small portion of the population with severe allergies, fire ant stings can cause reactions like swelling of the skin and troubled breathing. If you are stung by fire ants, carefully squeeze the venom out, gently



**These fiery little pests aren’t just a nuisance to your outdoor fun. They can deliver painful stings and leave small blisters on your skin.**

wash the area with soap and water, and place a cool washcloth or ice on the area for 15 minutes. If you are allergic, consult a doctor immediately. To keep fire ants at bay, Hill recommends these helpful tips:

- Clean up spilled food and drinks quickly.
- Pick up your pet’s food at night. Don’t feed pets outdoors.
- Keep children away from mounds.
- Keep your yard mowed to 3 inches or shorter.
- Hire a pest control professional for treatment.

While it is possible to control fire ant populations in your yard, they tend to reinvade fairly quickly. Regular inspections and treatments by pest professionals are required to effectively protect your yard from fire ants.

For more information on how to prevent and treat problems with fire ants, visit [www.orkin.com](http://www.orkin.com) or call (800) 800-ORKIN.