

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

The Stinging Truth About Fire Ants

(NAPSA)—Despite their size (1/8" to 3/8" long), fire ants are dangerous pests. Americans spend approximately \$6 billion annually on control measures, medical treatments and damages related to fire ants, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS).

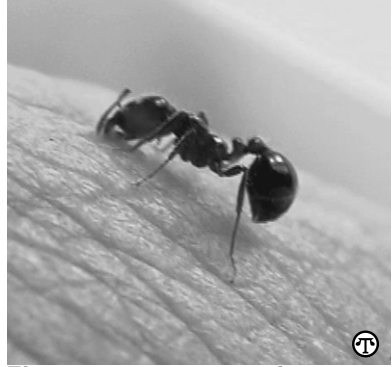
According to Orkin, Inc., these reddish-brown insects, named for their fiery stings, are territorial pests that send out alarm pheromones, or signals, climb out of mounds and sting to defend their homes. Fire ant stings typically cause small blisters or pustules to form at the site of each sting. Blisters itch and burn while healing and are prone to infection if irritated.

Of the several species of stinging ants, the red imported fire ant, which has infested more than 321 million acres in 12 southeastern states and Puerto Rico according to the ARS, is the most aggressive. In fact, red imported fire ants pose a much greater threat than their cousins, the native fire ants.

In addition to their painful stings, red imported fire ants are also known for living in large populations throughout the southeastern United States.

"Depending on whether colonies have one or multiple queens, they can contain hundreds of thousands to millions of ants," said Orkin entomologist Ron Harrison, Ph.D. "While fire ants enjoy warm weather, homeowners should know that extreme conditions send them indoors seeking shelter, food and more favorable conditions."

Common sites for indoor infestations include wall voids, bath traps and shower stalls.



Fire ants are aggressive pests named for their fiery stings.

While fire ants are omnivorous and regularly kill insects, ground-nesting birds and other wildlife, they are also attracted to oily, greasy foods and pet food in and around the home.

According to Harrison, the survival instincts of fire ants make successful, long-term control difficult to achieve and best left to a pest control professional. He also recommends:

- Regularly monitoring yards for mounds and ant activity;
- Sealing cracks around doors, windows and air-conditioning units;
- Rinsing cans before placing them in recycling bins; and
- Storing pet food in tightly sealed containers.

People who experience severe reactions to fire ant stings, such as difficulty breathing, severe swelling, blistering or infection at the site of the sting, or aggravated skin disorders, should consult a physician.

For more information on fire ants or to schedule an inspection, call 1-800-800-ORKIN or visit www.orkin.com.