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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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FIRE ANT CONTROL

Red imported fire ants can be controlled with persistence, patience and the right plan. The Texas Two-step Method gives excellent control of fire ants, particularly in larger lawns and neighborhoods where their mounds are numerous (more than five per 1/4-acre yard). Two-step pesticides can be found in nurseries, garden centers, and hardware or pesticide speciality stores. When properly applied, this method causes little risk to people, pets or the environment.

The first step is to broadcast a fire ant bait—a product containing a food plus an insecticide—over the whole yard, usually in the fall and spring. When collected by worker ants, bait particles are carried to the colony and shared with the queen and other ants. Less pesticide is needed with baits because this kind of delivery is so efficient.

Baits work best when scattered lightly over the whole yard. Hand-held seed spreaders are ideal for applying fire ant baits. Set the spreader on the smallest opening and make one pass over the area to be treated. This should apply the recommended rate (1 to 1 ½ pounds per acre for most products). Push-type fertilizer spreaders put out most baits too quickly.

Be patient. Baits work slowly. Products containing hydramethylnon or spinosad work the fastest, controlling ants within 2 to 4 weeks. Insect growth regulator baits (like fenoxycarb, pyriproxifen, and methoprene) usually require 2 to 6 months. The advantage of growth regulators is that they need to be reapplied less often when treating areas larger than an acre.

Apply baits at the right time. Baits are effective only when fire ants are actively searching for food. Ants remove baits from the soil surface

within a few hours if baits are applied during peak foraging times. Fire ants forage when the soil surface temperature is between 70 and 90 degrees F, May to September in most of Texas. Fall applications work well to reduce fire ant numbers the following spring. During winter, fire ants forage little and rarely pick up baits.

The second step is to treat problem ant colonies-those needing immediate attention-using a mound treatment. Mound treatment is the fastest way to get rid of individual colonies. It's not necessary to treat all fire ant colonies with mound treatments after applying a bait. Limit *Step Two* treatments to mounds located next to house foundations, in high-traffic areas or other trouble spots.

Individual mound treatments with products containing one of the following works well: cyfluthrin, d-limonene, deltamethrin, carbaryl, pyrethrins, acephate, permethrin.

For additional information on Fire Ants check the Gregg County website at: gregg-tx.tamu.edu.

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