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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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ACT NOW FOR A FIRE ANT-FREE SPRING

Even though there is no way to eradicate red imported fire ants currently, there are effective ways to reduce or eliminate fire ants for specific areas where control efforts are made. Although most people still think of trying to control fire ants in the spring, entomologists at Texas A&M University believe that an ideal time to start control programs in turfgrass areas is during the fall.

The program advocated for lawns in heavily infested areas in the eastern half of Texas and the Southeastern States is called "the Two-Step-Method." This program uses the annual or semi-annual broadcast application of one of the effective fire ant bait products like Amdro, Ascend or Logic (also sold as Award, Siege and other trade names). The second step is the use of an individual fire ant mound treatment product like a dust, drench, bait or granular insecticide to treat "nuisance" or "escape" mounds.

Because of the slow-acting nature of bait-formulated fire ant insecticides, they are ideally applied in the fall in order to reduce fire ants by spring. After all, spring is the time when most Texans expect to really enjoy the great outdoors.

Amdro, when broadcast at a rate of 1- to 1½-pounds per acre, provides maximum control three to six weeks after application. Products containing an insect-growth regulator such as Logic act much more slowly, since these products do not kill worker ants. Rather, they prevent the production and development of new workers. Ants in the mound at the time of treatment must die off naturally. Maximum effects from these "insect growth regulator" insecticides occurs three to nine months

following application. All of the bait products are very safe for use around the home when used as directed, but none are registered for use in home gardens.

Bait-formulated products are generally formulated on processed corn grits. The active ingredients are dissolved in soybean oil which coats the grits. If the soybean oil is old or exposed to air, it becomes rancid and unattractive to foraging ants. Therefore, it is most important to use a fresh product. Baits are best applied using crank-type seeders or spreaders. Hand-held or over-the-shoulder spreaders are best for treating small areas. Larger electronic spreaders are available to treat large areas. Baits must be applied to dry ground when no rain is expected for 24 to 48 hours after treatment. They can not be applied as mixtures with seeds or fertilizers since bait attractiveness to the ants will be lost.

If individual mound treatments are needed, wait five to seven days after broadcasting the bait before treating. "Nuisance" mounds are those around the mail box or by the gate which need to be eliminated right away. "Escape" mounds refer to those colonies which, for some reason, were not effected by the bait treatment. Ants in these mounds may have been feeding on another, more attractive source of food when the bait was applied. Colonies may also have migrated into the bait-treated area from adjacent untreated areas. Very few mounds will need to be treated individually once the effects of a successful bait application have been achieved.

Although the "Two-Step-Method" is considered appropriate for most turfgrass areas in heavily infested areas, there are other approaches. In small areas with low ant mounds numbers or in areas where there is an interest in preserving native ant species, use of individual mound treatments for red imported fire ant suppression may be more appropriate. Furthermore, use of slow-acting bait-formulated products may not be suitable in flood-prone areas. And finally, the use of baits and individual fire ant mound treatments will not prevent ants from migrating into or colonizing treated areas. In those areas where absolutely no ants can be tolerated, surface treatments of contact insecticide may be necessary.

Whatever fire ant control efforts are used, take care to follow use instructions provided on the product label. None of the methods of fire ant control available today eliminate ants forever. Plan to re-apply treatments as needed for as long as control is desired.

**BEEF AND FORAGE CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 11, 2003**

The Annual Build East Texas Beef and Forage Conference will be held on Thursday, September 11, 2003. The program will begin with the meal at 6:00 p.m. in the Gregg County Extension Auditorium at 405 East Marshall in Longview. A registration fee of \$10.00 is payable at the door. Those planning to attend are asked to preregister at the Gregg County Extension Office, 903-236-8429, for the evening meal.

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Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.