

Bug-Wise

No. 3
March 25, 2004



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Time to Apply Fire Ant Baits: In terms of time and money spent, baits are one of the most effective methods of controlling fire ants in the home lawn, and spring is the best time of the year to apply fire ant baits. This does not mean that a single spring application of bait will provide season-long fire ant control, but it will greatly aid in reducing the number of fire ant mounds present in a lawn. By making a broadcast application of fire ant bait in the early spring and **following up with additional treatments in mid-summer and early fall**, homeowners can reduce fire ant populations by 80 to 90%. Any surviving, or especially troublesome mounds can then be controlled with one of the individual mound treatments discussed in the following section.

These **bait treatments must be applied broadcast**, rather than as individual mound treatments, in order to control the many small colonies that do not yet have visible mounds. On small to moderate sized lawns a small hand-powered spreader does an efficient job of spreading the bait. Foraging workers will collect the bait granules and carry them back to the colony, where they will be shared with all members of the colony, including the queen. Fire ant baits are designed to be slow-acting, in order to allow time for the insecticide to be dispersed through the colony, so it may take 2 to 6 weeks to see the full effect of the bait application.

Bait treatments that are recommended for control of fire ants are listed in the following table. Be sure to carefully read the label before purchasing and applying the bait. Most fire ant baits are used at a rate of 1 to 1.5 lbs per acre, but there are exceptions. That's not a lot of material, so it's important not to be too heavy handed when applying baits; they are too costly to waste. With most spreaders you'll want to start with the lowest setting possible, or the setting specified in the spreader instructions for the particular bait being used. When purchasing fire ant baits, buy only enough for one application. The oil in the baits tends to go rancid over time and rancid bait is not attractive to the ants. Avoid applying baits immediately before or after rainfall or watering. If rainfall occurs within six hours or so after baits were applied, it is probably a good idea to re-apply.

Baits for Control of Fire Ants *

Brand Name (insecticide) (% ai)	Rate/acre
Amdro Bait (hydromethylon) (0.73%) ***	1 to 1.5 lb
Award Bait (fenoxycarb) (1.0%)	1 to 1.5 lb
Justice Bait (spinosad) (0.015%)	
Come & Get It Bait (spinosad) (0.015%)	2.5 to 5 lb
Chipco FireStar (fipronil) (0.00015%)	1.5 – 15 lb
Distance (pyriproxyfen) (0.5%)	1 to 1.5 lb
Extinguish (methoprene) (0.5%) ***	1 to 1.5 lb
Ascend (abamectin) (0.011%)	1 lb

* Avoid applying baits immediately before or after irrigation or rainfall.

** When treating individual mounds, baits should be applied in an area around the mound, not on top of the mound.

*** Amdro and Extinguish are labeled for application to pastures and rangeland. Check and follow label.

Baits may require 2 to 6 weeks to provide maximum results.

Treating Individual Fire Ant Mounds: What about those fire ant mounds that appear or persist after a bait treatment? Individual mound treatments, containing contact insecticides, provide much quicker control than bait treatments, and are an effective way to quickly eliminate fire ant colonies that are especially troublesome.

Several different types of individual mound treatments are available. These include liquid drenches, granular treatments, dry powders, and even injectable aerosols. The liquid drenches provide the quickest control, but they are time consuming to mix and apply. The dry powder type treatments are easy and convenient to use, but may take several days to provide control. When treating individual mounds with any insecticide, **do not disturb mounds before treating**. If you do, the colony will attempt to take the queen or queens to safety, either by moving them deeper down in the mound or by moving them laterally to establish satellite mounds.

When using liquid drenches, it is important to apply enough liquid to thoroughly soak the mound. Depending on the size of the mound, this ranges from one to two gallons of mixed drench. When applying liquid drenches, begin by applying about ¼ of the total volume to a 10 to 12 inch band around the periphery of the mound. This is to prevent the escape of the queen through lateral foraging tunnels and to improve control of workers. Then apply the bulk of the drench directly to the mound. Failure to use enough water to thoroughly soak the mound is the primary reason for unsuccessful mound drenching efforts.

Mound Drench Treatments for Control of Fire Ants in Home Lawns *

Insecticide	Brand Name (example)	Rate
Acephate (75% SP)	Orthene 75 TTO (75%)	2 teaspoons/gal
Carbaryl (22.5% concentrate)	Sevin Concentrate Bug Killer	¾ fl oz/gal
Permethrin (2.5% concentrate)	Bonide Eight Insect Control	2/3 fl oz/gal
Permethrin (38% concentrate)	Hi Yield 38 Plus	1.6 fl oz/gal

* Depending on the size of the mound, it takes 1 to 2 gallons of water-insecticide mix to drench a fire ant mound effectively. Drench the mound and an area approximately 10 to 12 inches around the perimeter of the mound. **Do not disturb mounds before drenching**.

Dry Mound Treatments for Control of Fire Ants in Home Lawns *

Insecticide	Brand Name (example)	Amount/mound
acephate	Orthene 75 TTO (75%)	1 - 2 teaspoons
cyfluthrin	Bayer Fire Ant Killer (1.0%)	1 teaspoon
deltamethrin	Bengal Ultra Dust Fire Ant Killer (0.05%) Terro Fire Ant Killer (0.05%)	1 tablespoon

* Sprinkle dry product over and around mound as directed on label.

Do not disturb the mound before or after treatment.

Crane Flies: The large, leggy, mosquito-looking flies that are so common now are known as crane flies. Other than their somewhat ‘bumbling’ nuisance effect, they are harmless. The larvae, which are known as ‘leather jackets’ live in grass sod in lawns and pastures where they feed on decaying organic matter and some roots. Although the larvae of a few species of crane flies occurring in other parts of the country and world are recognized as important pests of turf grass, the species that we have here are not considered pests.

Slugs: Slugs and snails are common nuisance pests in and around home lawns. They can be especially damaging to tender ornamentals, such as hosta, especially when these plants are just emerging from winter dormancy and leaves are still small and tender. Slugs are nocturnal and often move onto patios, carports, etc at night, leaving trails of clear dried mucus as evidence of their passage. Slugs are attracted to areas where pets are fed and will often be concentrated in and around such areas, creating a nuisance. These pests are best controlled by the use of specially formulated baits. Baits containing metaldehyde are effective, but because these baits are toxic to pets and wildlife, care must be taken to use them properly. Read and follow label directions. Recently, baits containing iron phosphate have also become available. These are labeled for use around domestic animals.