

What Can You Do?

- Report any suspected fire ant mounds to your County Agricultural Commissioner's Office (listed in the telephone book under the County Government section).
- Educate children about the fire ant and its potential hazards.
- Do not enclose or tie pets near the fire ant mounds.
- Individual ant mounds can be destroyed by pouring one to two gallons of hot tap water into the mound. If enough hot water reaches the queen, it will destroy her, and eventually the colony. Hot water treatments are not 100% effective.
- Other materials used to combat the fire ant can be obtained from your local nurseries or gardening supply store. Some commercially available fire ant combatants are applied as a liquid drench over the mound or as granule baits containing insect growth regulators.
- Work with your neighbors to schedule fire ant abatements. Destroying mounds on your property will not prevent re-infestation from surrounding properties that are not treated.
- To stop the spread of these ants, avoid moving soil, potted plants from your property. Fire ants may also be present in firewood stacks, lumber, tires and many other items that may be stored on your property. Any item infested with these ants should not be moved to other areas.

Health Concerns

Fire ants are aggressive and will repeatedly sting anything that disturbs them. Symptoms of a sting include burning and itching, which usually subsides within 60 minutes. Within the next four hours, a small

blister forms at the site of each sting. A white pustule forms in a day or two. Treatment is aimed at preventing secondary bacterial infection, which may occur if the pustule is scratched or broken. Although the stings are not usually life threatening, they are easily infected.

On rare occasions, anaphylaxis – or a generalized, systemic allergic reaction to the fire ant stings – can occur, and may be life-threatening. It usually occurs in persons sensitized by a previous sting. It may be manifested by flushing, general hives, swelling of the face, eyes, or throat, chest pains, nausea, severe sweating, loss of breath or slurred speech. **If this occurs, the person should immediately seek emergency medical assistance.**

Treatment – Elevate the extremity and apply ice or a cold compress to reduce swelling and relieve pain. Clean blisters with soap and water to prevent secondary infection. Do not break the blister. Topical steroid ointments and oral antihistamines may relieve the itching associated with these reactions. Treatment with antihistamines and oral steroids may be useful in severe cases.

Tips to avoid fire ant stings include:

- *Fire-ant allergic patients should wear closed-toed shoes, socks, and gloves when gardening, and take other precautions to avoid stings;*
- *Fire ant mounds near the home should be identified and treated with an ant bait insecticide; and*
- *Children should be taught about fire ants and their hazard.*

These preventive measures should help reduce the health hazards caused by fire ant stings. Your allergist can provide you with more information on fire ant stings.

Red Imported Fire Ant In California



Learning more about the fire ant in California

