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Fire ants inflict painful stings on anyone who comes into contact with them and can cause allergic reactions in susceptible individuals. They will aggressively defend their mounds if disturbed. Despite the problems they cause, fire ant infestations can be managed and their harmful effects minimized.

Unfortunately, there is not a silver bullet for controlling fire ants. The goal of any treatment is to eliminate fire ants where the risk to people is high, and to reduce infestations to minimal levels. The main objective of any control measure is to kill the queen since she is the only one capable of reproducing and without her the whole colony will die.

There are basically three strategies when using chemical pesticides. The first one involves broadcasting a bait, which is an insecticide mixed with a food source that attracts ants throughout the infested area. Amdro® and Maxforce® are examples of baits used for controlling fire ants. Make sure the ground is dry before broadcasting. Worker ants carry the bait into their mounds and feed it to the queen. Eventually the whole colony will die.

The second strategy is treating the individual mounds with an insecticidal drench, which consists of an insecticide, such as liquid Sevin or Orthene, diluted in water. The drench is quite effective in controlling the ants if it penetrates deeply to the bottom of the mound.

The third strategy is to apply a broadcast application of a granular insecticide labeled for the control of fire ants, such as Over' n' Out®, or Triazicide Once-and-Done Insect Killer™, to the entire area where you want control. These products can take a few days to work but can potentially control the fire ants for up to a year if applied properly. The application of the granules can help prevent new infestations in the treated area. Remember, when using pesticides please follow all label directions and safety precautions.

If you are reluctant to using pesticides, pouring boiling water on top of the mounds works fairly well. The best times to do so are when the ants are close to the surface as on a sunny cool day. Most of the ants are usually killed, although sometimes the mounds will have to be retreated.



*Fire ants become aggressive if their nests are disturbed. (Photograph by Chris Evans, River to River CWMA, Bugwood.org)*