Red Imported Fire Ant
(Solenopsis invicta)

DESCRIPTION:
The red imported fire ant is an invasive species that
inhabits lawns, pastures, fields and roadsides to create
lumpy soil mounds. They are known to sting people and
animals which can be quite painful.

HOSTS:
The red imported fire ant can affect residential lawn areas
and public areas such as parks and playgrounds. The pest
typically affects lawns in southern states ranging from
North Carolina to Texas and has also been found in areas
of California.

BIOLOGY AND SYMPTOMS:
The queen fire ant will choose a nesting spot in an
open, sunny area to lay eggs and create a colony. A
colony can contain as many as 500,000 ants after three
years. The ants tunnel under grass to create mounds
that pile up above ground. Stepping on or otherwise
disturbing the mounds prompts the ants to sting the
culprit. This creates a burning sensation, and later, a
blister.

MANAGEMENT:
Red imported fire ant colonies can be controlled in
several ways. Effective DIY methods include drenching
the mounds in boiled water or lining mounds with
fire ant baits. To eliminate with water, boil at least 3
gallons of water to about 200°F and slowly pour the
water on top of the mound. This method would not
be practical in areas with flowers, turfgrass or plants
nearby, as the scorching water may harm the plants. As
an alternate option, apply fire ant baits around the
perimeter of a mound taking extra precaution not
to touch or disturb it. If neither method is suitable,
talk to a professional arborist about treatment. After
treatment, avoid a new infestation by inspecting lawns
in open areas yearly and making sure newly purchased
plants are free of fire ant activity.