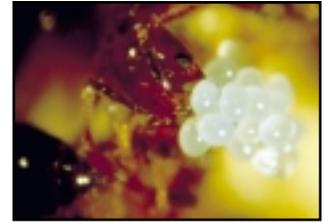


YELLOW BORDER/BACKGROUND

1. Fire ant egg cluster

This is a photograph of a red imported fire ant egg cluster laid by the fire ant queen. Normally the queen lays eggs in clusters of 10. The queen cares for these eggs until the pupae hatch into adult worker ants. The worker ants now care for the queen as she begins her egg-laying duties.



2. Fire ant larvae

The larval stage is one of the developmental stages of the red imported fire ant. Larvae molt four times over a 12- to 15-day period. They then develop into pupae. The fourth instar fire ant larva is the only stage of fire ant able to digest solid food. The food is placed in a special pocket, called a "food basket," just below the mouth and is digested externally. The fluid that is produced by the digestion process is picked up by the worker ants and fed to the queen and the other larval stages.



3. Fire ant pupae

The pupa is one of the developmental stages in a fire ants life cycle. Pupae develop into different size workers and winged forms. The pupae do not eat, nor do they move by themselves.



4. Fire ant queen with worker ants

A newly mated queen lays about a dozen eggs. When they hatch 7 to 10 days later, the larvae are fed by the queen. These larvae develop into small worker ants that will feed the queen and her subsequent offspring. Later, a queen fed by worker ants can lay from 800 to 1,000 eggs per day if needed.



5. Fire ant worker ants

Worker fire ants are wingless, sterile females. They protect the queen by defending the nest from intruders. They feed the queen only food that other worker fire ants or larvae have eaten first. They move the queen if she is in danger.

