

Hints for Effective Bait Treatments

Bait treatments for fire ants are frequently recommended and are often a great choice for controlling fire ant populations. Fire ant baits rely upon the fire ants to pick the material up and take it back to their mounds. Once in the colony the bait is incorporated into the food system where the active ingredient is passed to all members of the colony. The following tips should allow the applicator to obtain the highest level of control.

1. *Baits must be applied while RIFA are actively foraging.* Technically, this is determined by the surface temperature. Temperatures between 70° and 90° F are ideal. The easiest way to determine if RIFA are actively foraging is the use of a test bait. Place a small amount of bait in the area to be treated. RIFA should hit the bait within 30 minutes.



2. *Use fresh bait.* Most baits are formulated with three components, an active ingredient, soybean oil as a carrier, and defatted corn grit as a matrix. If the soybean oil goes rancid it is not attractive to the fire ants and they won't pick it up. Baits usually do not store well so should be purchased in one time use quantities. They should be stored in a cool dry place until used.

3. *Baits need to be applied when it is dry.* A 12 hour window is recommended before rain or irrigation.

4. *1—1.5 lbs of bait is not a lot of product.* This comes to about 30 granules per square foot. A good starting point for calibration is 1/8 inch opening at 6—8 miles per hour. The speed can be slowed by skipping a swath.



5. *RIFA can forage a long distance from their colonies.* When baiting difficult or sensitive areas this can be used. For example, a 30 foot buffer can be used around a pond to effectively treat mounds close to the pond. Another example might be RIFA invading homes. Treatment around the outside perimeter is frequently effective against the home invaders.