

Fire Ant Initiative Action Plan – FY 2006-2007

Maximum 500 words, double-spaced, type size at least 12 points, do not exceed boundaries. Include statement on anticipated outcomes.

Fire ants are a growing concern among health care professionals because of the potential for stings, including a significant number of attacks on bedridden patients in nursing care facilities in the past 10 years. Numerous stinging cases, several of which have resulted in patient death, have been reported in the literature and in the popular press. Cost of litigation of such cases can run into the millions of dollars, further hurting the nursing care industry statewide through increased insurance premiums.

To date, little is known about the level of training or awareness about the fire ant problem among nursing center administrators or their pest control providers. Such data are necessary to design effective training materials and educational programs to reduce the risk of fire ants to nursing home residents. In addition, there are few data on the relative effectiveness of outdoor treatment to prevent ant entry and protect at-risk patients in such facilities.

This study proposes to evaluate the levels of knowledge and awareness among nursing care facility administrators and pest control providers for these facilities. The three treatment protocols proposed for evaluation include 1) mound treatments only; 2) perimeter broadcast bait plus mound treatment; and 3) perimeter broadcast bait, close-perimeter residual sprays and granules and mound treatment. Effectiveness of the treatments will be assessed through monthly sampling conducted by university cooperators and well as reports from facility staff. A total of 30 nursing care facilities will be studied.

Expected results of the project include better understanding of the current quality of fire ant control around Texas nursing homes and better understanding of educational and training needs of pest control and nursing care professionals. Additionally this research will verify the effectiveness of two different treatment protocols for excluding fire ants from health care buildings. These results will make possible development of training programs and materials, and a set of best management practices for control of fire ants around sensitive buildings such as schools, childcare facilities and long-term health care facilities like nursing homes.