Brevard Public Schools

Pest Press

Issue 4 | "Pesticides don't prevent pests, they kill pests." | April 2005

Pest of the Month

Fire Ants

Red Imported Fire Ant Mound

Pustules from Fire Ant Stings

Ant larvae

Inside This Issue

IPM Integrated Pest Management Florida | University of Florida IFAS Extension

Editors: Rebecca Baldwin and Dr. Faith Oi

How quick are you? I know we all love to kick over fire ant mounds and quickly pull back to watch them boil out. We watch in delight knowing that they will have to work hard to rebuild their mound. Serves them right for all the pain they put us through. Well, warm weather is here and just as the trees start their budding, fire ants start their building. As the weather continues to warm up, you will really begin to see some fire ant activity. When it is cool, they like to build mounds near sidewalks or slabs presumably for the warmth. I have already seen two mounds appear in my yard seemingly overnight. As I am sure you well know, fire ants are a problem because of their painful stings and because their mounds can damage turf and lawn equipment.

Red imported fire ants, or more commonly, fire ants, *Solenopsis invicta*, are not native to the United States. These ants were accidentally introduced into the US in ships traveling from Brazil sometime in the 1930's. They were first documented in the United States in Mobile, Alabama and have now moved across the Southeastern U.S. and into California. Fire ants will hunt for living insects and will even feed on dead animals. They may forage into buildings for sweets, proteins and fats and may even seek out dirty laundry to feed on body oils. These guys generally nest outdoors, but have been known to form a nest where there is a food source, like in a box of unwrapped candy on the floor. These highly aggressive ants can usually be seen in trails going to a food source. The foragers come in multiple sizes known as majors and minors. If you suspect that fire ants are in your home or classroom, look for these characteristics:

- A trail of medium-sized red and black ants with workers of different sizes
- A nearby mound or nest (usually outside)

What to do when you see ants trailing in your classroom.

First of all, there is usually a reason why ants are trailing inside. See if you can follow the ant trail to a food source. Many times, there is half of a candy bar in a desk or some left over food in a trash can that is acting as the attractant. You can usually remove the food source and the ants will naturally return outside. If the

Continued . . .

trash can is the culprit, be sure to wash it out before returning it to the classroom. Even a little food residue can feed ants for a long time. If food is common in the classroom, be sure that it is stored in plastic containers with snap-tight lids. To further clean up potential food sources, one idea is to have weekly clean-out sessions where students remove any debris from their desk, lockers, and backpacks. If ants continue to be a problem in trash cans, one solution is to temporarily set the trash bin in a shallow container, like a baking pan, of soapy water. The ants will not be able to cross the moat, so cannot forage in that area. You may also want to clean the area where the ants were trailing with soapy water so the chemical trail the ants are following is removed. If the soapy water contacts the ants, they will become immobilized and can be wiped up and discarded. If you are unable to locate an attractant or if the ants are a consistent problem, make sure to report it by filling out the pest sighting log in the front office. If you suspect that your ant problem is fire ants, you will want to act quickly and carefully so that the ants can be managed before anyone is stung.

Mystery of the month . . .

The mystery of the month for April is a question.

Question:

Do fire ants bite or sting?

Many people say that they have ant bites when they have been stung by fire ants. You might be surprised to find out that fire ants do both, bite and sting. They bite the flesh with their mandibles in order to gain leverage to inject their venom with their stinger. The result is a white pustule that appears within 24 hours of the sting. Ouch and double ouch.

Yes, fire ants do bite and sting

Integrated Pest Management .

Get ready 'cause here we come. The BPS pilot program is about to reach the one year anniversary of the School IPM Monroe Model implementation. To celebrate the success of the pilot schools, the IPM team is preparing to expand into six more BPSs. The BPS pilot schools, McNair, Sherwood and Surfside have well exceeded expectations and will serve as models for the other schools to follow. Congratulations on your success and thank you in advance for your role in mentoring your colleagues in the expansion schools.

For more information about IPM in schools, or to view past issues of the Pest Press, please visit
http://schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu

Meet the Surfside Team:

Steve Giorgio and Kevin Klotch

This month, I would like to introduce you to Steve Giorgio and your own Kevin Klotch. Steve is the Truly Nolen pest management professional and Kevin is the head custodian at Surfside Elementary. Steve and Kevin work together to maintain an effective pest management program. Next time you see Steve or Kevin, be sure to say hello.

Steve Giorgio, Truly Nolen (left) and Kevin Klotch, BPS (right) at Surfside Elementary during a monthly IPM inspection.

For further information about BPS IPM program, contact: **Earl Lewallen**, IPMCoordinator 321-617-7748