



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What are the different ways to control fire ants?

A: The traditional method of treatment consists of treating each mound individually through the use of a mound drench, a mound injection, dusts, baits or fumigants. Though the methods work quickly, they kill on contact, meaning ants well under the surface or outside the point of contact survive. Plus, these methods usually have a short residual, meaning they provide quick kills of existing ants but do little to control ants that move in days later.

A more effective method is broadcast treatment, which involves applying an insecticide over a wide area. One advantage to broadcast treatments is that newer colonies may be controlled or even prevented. Most broadcast baits can offer significant control but dissolve when wet, making them useless. TopChoice, a non-bait, professionally-applied granular insecticide, doesn't lose its effectiveness in water and does not need to be reapplied.

Q: Aren't there non-toxic ways to control fire ants?

A: Studies are currently being done on biological controls, such as phorid flies, which may offer some hope for control in the future. More commonly used home remedies, such as pouring grits, hot water or gasoline simply don't work, and they can be harmful to the surrounding environment. Individuals also risk personal injury when trying to treat fire ant mounds themselves. TopChoice is actually the lowest dose, non-bait insecticide on the professional market, and its active ingredient is non-harmful to humans and animals. It's the same ingredient commonly used to control fleas and ticks on millions of pets.

Q: How does TopChoice work?

A: TopChoice takes advantage of the natural behavior of fire ants. Worker ants do not die immediately upon contact with the granular insecticide. Rather, they return to the mound to contaminate the rest of the ants in what is known as the "Domino Effect[®]." The active ingredient in TopChoice acts gradually, enabling both the colony and the nest to be eliminated. And when remaining worker ants try to partially rebuild a mound, they come into contact with the treated soil, causing the Domino Effect to continue.

Q: Explain how the TopChoice kills ants.

A: The active ingredient in TopChoice acts on GABA receptors of fire ants, which "switch off" nerve impulses. Blocking the GABA action causes severe disruption of the insect's nervous system. Because the ants can't detect the product and it doesn't kill them immediately, they transfer it to other ants when they return to the mound. A very low dose of TopChoice is required for effectiveness. And, this control process is non-harmful to mammals, making TopChoice a very good approach when children, and pets like dogs and cats, are present.

Q: Why are fire ants so difficult to control?

A: Fire ants are extremely resilient, and their ability to return and thrive after the application of most insecticides makes them difficult to control. In addition, colonies have multiple queens that can produce reproductives at any time – as many as 1,500 eggs per day for as long as seven years. Colonies are also mobile, and their lateral tunnels penetrate deep into the soil and spread several feet in numerous directions. Even if you manage to control fire ants on your property, fire ants from adjacent properties can easily invade, which is why a communal approach is key to controlling fire ants.

Q: How does TopChoice work for as long as you say it does?

A: The unique mode of action of TopChoice’s active ingredient allows the insecticide to kill the colony over a long period of time using what’s known as the “Domino Effect[®].” Within the first four to six weeks of a TopChoice application, ants unknowingly come in contact with the product and bring it back to contaminate and eliminate the rest of the mound. Unlike temporary fixes, the Domino Effect means the entire ant colony is destroyed, not just surface ants. Then, TopChoice remains in the soil to prevent new colonies from forming.

Q: Why are fire ants so common in the south?

A: The red imported fire ant was inadvertently introduced to the United States from South America through the Port of Mobile, Alabama in the 1930s. Much of their spread is due to the movement of grass sod and woody ornamentals used in landscaping. However, the ants have expanded naturally and steadily into new territories because of their high reproductive rate.

Fire ants currently infest what is known as the “Fire Ant 13”: Arkansas, Alabama, California, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas (and Puerto Rico). They are also moving northward and westward into Arizona, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and Virginia.

Q: Why are fire ants dangerous?

A: Nearly 40 million Americans live in potential conflict with fire ants. Fire ants don’t just sting once; they release an attack hormone that calls other ants to swarm and sting in large numbers. It is estimated that 20 million people are stung each year by fire ants, and most of the time, the reaction includes burning and itching and the formation of a blister that can be treated fairly easily. However, the venom of the fire ant is a serious allergen, and about one to two percent of the population can have a severe, even fatal, systemic allergic reaction. Studies also show that 10-15% of all people can have severe localized allergic reactions to fire ants. Children, the elderly and pets are especially at risk. The health threat fire ants pose can be diminished with the proper treatment. While medical science can treat the after effects of fire ant stings, Bayer Environmental Science has developed a preventative solution, TopChoice. For more information, contact your local lawn care or pest control professional, or visit www.nofireants.com.

Q: Do fire ants cause structural problems to homes the way termites do?

A: Fire ants are responsible for an estimated \$2 billion in property damage annually, and they cause as much damage in Florida and Texas alone, as they do in the other southern states combined. They tend to nest near urban structures, such as walls, sidewalks and roadways, causing damage upon abandonment. They are also attracted to electrical currents and have caused considerable damage to things like heat pumps, telephone junction boxes, air conditioners, transformers, traffic lights and gas pumps.

Q: When is the best time to treat for fire ants?

A: Any time is a good time to treat for fire ants with TopChoice. The product remains in the soil until ants – which may be deep underground in the hot summer months – come in contact with it. Once they make contact with the product, they bring it back to the mound to infect the other ants and collapse the mound.

Q: So, if fire ants don't like hot dry weather, aren't they less of a problem in the summer?

A: Fire ants are a year-round problem, and they are just as active and dangerous in the summer. But without moisture, they do not make their signature mounds, which means that you can't spot them as easily.

Q: Is it really true that TopChoice guarantees elimination of fire ants for one year?

A: TopChoice provides control of fire ants for one full year with a single, professional application. Control is usually achieved within four to six weeks. It is the only professionally-applied product available to treat fire ants that can make such a claim.

Q. Why does TopChoice take four to six weeks to work?

A. Unlike temporary or quick fixes, TopChoice works by allowing foraging ants to unknowingly pick up the active ingredient and distribute it to the rest of the colony – a process called the “Domino Effect™.” This means the entire ant colony is destroyed, not just surface ants. The product remains in the soil to prevent new colonies from forming.

Q: Is there any real way to prevent a fire ant problem in the first place?

A: Fire ants are entrenched in the South, and their resiliency and rate of reproduction make them virtually impossible to completely eradicate. Only TopChoice, professionally-applied once a year, creates a fire ant “exclusion zone” on your property.

Q: Where can I find more information on TopChoice?

A: Your local lawn care or pest control professional can talk with you about TopChoice. Or, visit www.nofireants.com.

Q: How does TopChoice compare in price to other professional treatments?

A: The effectiveness of TopChoice and the long-term savings in terms of time and safety far outweigh the costs of application. In addition, the cost of a single professional TopChoice application often costs less than numerous treatments with other options.

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