



Identification of the species

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has identified the European Fire Ant *Myrmica rubra* Linnaeus as present in Nova Scotia. CFIA has stated this is not a regulated pest for Canada and is known to be present in North Eastern US and in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Biology

The European fire ant is an invasive, exotic species that is a nuisance pest for people. Generally speaking, *M. rubra* worker ants are very small (4 to 5 mm) and reddish-brown. The queen is a little larger. Their waist has 2 segments and there are two backward pointing spines on the middle body section, visible with a magnifying glass. They aggressively defend their territory and readily sting humans and pets in their foraging area.

They nest in decaying logs or soil, and under rocks and debris. It appears the ants spread two ways. One way is by "colony budding" into adjacent areas where a group of ants, including the queen, moves from the original colony and establishes a new nest nearby. They are also spread by human transport of nests from infested areas (soil, decaying logs, potted plants etc.).

Locations in Nova Scotia

To date, populations of the European Fire Ant are known in the Summit Street and Jubilee Road area of peninsula Halifax and in Spryfield, Lower Sackville, Abercrombie, and Stellarton.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Perspective

The notwithstanding clause in the HRM Pesticide By-law (6(2)), places this issue outside the by-law and as such, it is a private property issue. From HRM's perspective however, the spirit of the by-law should be maintained with the fundamental intent being the protection of public health and the environment.

Suggested Management and Control

Mechanical Control

Avoid transporting materials (soil, mulch, plants etc.) unless you are certain it is free of fire ants.

Cultural Control

European Fire Ants build nests under rocks, boards, logs and anything that maintains a moist environment. Reduce nesting sites by removing these brooding areas in your yard. As with most

species of ant, it is important to properly store and dispose of food waste to avoid attracting the insects.

Use registered pest control products

All pest control products used in Canada are required to have a Pest Control Product Act Number (P.C.P. #), shown on the pesticide label/package. Suggested substances include borax and diatomaceous earth, both listed on HRM's Permitted Substance List (Administrative Order #23). Products containing these substances are available at most major retailers. Boric acid, when incorporated into ant bait, has been found effective against fire ants. It is recommended that you use any materials carefully and follow the manufacturers label instructions.

For more information on what is permitted in HRM, alternatives to pesticides and sustainable maintenance practices, visit the HRM pesticide website at http://www.halifax.ca/pesticides/permit_login.html. For additional treatments, visit the Clean Nova Scotia website and look for the ant link under "More Information" www.clean.ns.ca/pesticides.

Hire a certified applicator company

If you choose to hire a company to apply a treatment, look for an appropriately certified applicator. As the homeowner, you are responsible for asking the company what they are applying to your property and making a decision based on that information.

HRM recommends that signage be posted 24 hours prior to a pesticide application and remain posted for a period of four days after the application, warning that pesticides are in use.

References

Alejandro A. and Eleanor Groden (2007). European Fire Ant Featured Creatures http://creatures.ifas.ufl.edu/urban/ants/Myrmica_ruba.htm

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Maine Agricultural Centre. (2008). Fact Sheet - European Fire Ant: A new invasive species in Maine <http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmlpubs/2550.htm>

Town of Richmond Hill. (2006). European Fire Ant: Management Plan. http://www.richmondhill.ca/documents/prc_european_fire_ant_mgmt.pdf

