

what's buggin' ya?

AN EDUCATIONAL NEWSLETTER ON MANAGING INSECTS IN OUR ENVIRONMENT
Molly E. Keck, IPM Program Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service – Bexar County

Fall is upon us and we've already had a rush of cool air. Some interesting migrations have occurred, and it's time to start thinking about treating for some nasty pests. Read on to learn more about what's out and about this fall!

 Molly Keck

BUTTERFLIES, BUTTERFLIES, EVERYWHERE!

You may have noticed an abundance of orange and brown butterflies flying all over South Texas lately. These are **snout butterflies**, and they are currently making their northward migration. Many people have asked if Hurricane Ike prompted them to start moving, but the timing really has nothing to do with the storms.

Snout butterflies are medium sized butterflies that get their name from enlarged mouthparts that form a snout or beak. Their host plants are the hackberry species, although they prefer to lay their eggs on the shrub-like spiny hackberry.

During droughts, the natural enemies that normally keep the snout butterfly numbers low do not survive. The lack of natural predators, allows more snout butterflies to reach adulthood. In addition, summer rains help spiny hackberries grow new leaves, which encourage female snout butterflies to lay their eggs. The combination of the dry year and late summer rains has made the perfect environment for the snout butterflies!



Photo by Bart Drees

Snout butterflies are not considered pests, although they will force you to wash your car if you spend much time driving right now. Enjoy them while they are here, because they won't last long. By the end of September we probably won't be seeing them anymore.

For more information about snout butterflies visit these websites: <http://insects.tamu.edu/fieldguide> and <http://www.texasento.net/snout.htm>

FIRE ANT AWARENESS WEEK

Did you know that the first full week in September has been designated as Fire Ant Awareness week by the Texas Legislature? Now, you may wonder why we are still so concerned with fire ants, but fire ants are one of the few pests that affect multiple scopes: agriculture, ecology, human health, aesthetics, and more. Anyone who has lived in Texas for a short period of time has probably encountered fire ants... and no encounter is very pleasant.

Fall is the best time to treat for fire ants when using baits. Baits are a favorite of many homeowners because they are economical, kill colonies that you don't see yet, and take less labor to apply than dusts, drenches and granules do. The added bonus: you put fewer pesticides out into our environment! It doesn't take much bait to knock out all the fire ants in your yard. Fire ants pick up the bait as food and feed it to their queen. Once the queen is dead, the colony is dead. If you like to use organic products, you can even find organic baits.

Fire ants can also be controlled using dusts, drenches, and granules. Granules are applied as either a mound treatment or broadcast and then watered in. Dusts and drenches are used as individual mound treatments. When using dusts be sure not to use on a windy day to prevent drift. Drenches should be in one gallon increments to make sure that the pesticide soaks into the soil, so that it all the way to the queen. There are numerous products in the drench and dust formation, and many organic options are available.

For more information on fire ants visit the Texas AgriLife Bookstore at <http://agrilifebookstore.org> and look for these publications: B-6099, ER-.043, L-5070, L-L5496, SP-196 or visit <http://fireants.tamu.edu>.



ORGANIC BAITS FOR CONTROLLING FIRE ANTS

As our culture starts to move toward being more 'green,' many homeowners are turning to organic pesticides to control their pests. In each newsletter you will now find an article on an organic product of the season which will include information on where to use it, how to use it, and what it will control. As September is the month of Fire Ant Awareness, it is only appropriate to talk about an organic product used for controlling fire ants.



Currently, the only organic bait for fire ant control contains the active ingredient, spinosad. Spinosad is a derivative of a natural soil dwelling bacteria affects insects' nervous systems. Spinosad baits can be relatively fast acting, and are not the best choice when trying to control large, well established fire ant mounds. Baits must make there way through the colony to the queen(s) to be effective.

The pathway food takes within the colony is from the forager, who pick up the food and pass on to the larvae -- the only members of the colony that can eat solid food. The larvae eat the bait, partially digest it, and then regurgitate it back up. It is then taken to the queen, but before she eats it, her 'tasters' taste it. If any of these colony members die as the food makes its way to the queen, the queen will never get the food. Baits must be slow acting to be effective.

Research has shown that spinosad baits may work too fast, killing the workers and larvae before actually getting to the queen. For smaller colonies, spinosad baits are a good choice, but in large colonies it takes much longer for the bait to get the queen(s). Spinosad baits can be applied as a broadcast treatment to the entire yard, or individual mound treatments. Spinosad baits are available at nurseries, garden centers, and other locations that sell pesticides.

As always, read the label carefully and use proper precautions. Organic pesticides are still pesticides and should be use with caution.



Entomology is blogging now! The Bexar County blog is getting started. Visit for pest of the month articles, answers for your insect questions and more! Please be patient, it is still in the beginning phases:

<http://bexarento.blogspot.com>

Insect Questions and Answers

Q. I noticed that the mosquitoes aren't out biting me when the weather turned cold – did they die?

A. Unfortunately not. Insects get their body heat from their environment, so when it gets cold, they get cold and slow down. It isn't that the mosquitoes have died off in the cooler temperatures; it's just that they aren't as active. Once the weather heats up, they'll be back!

Q. I found some flying insects that look like bees or wasps. How can you tell the difference between bees and wasps?

A. Bees have hairy bodies, wasps are smooth and hairless.

The poster for the 2008 Entomology Educational Seminar Series features the AgriLIFE EXTENSION Texas A&M System logo at the top. It lists four seminars: 'Ants in Your Plants' on September 25, 'Organic Pest Management' on October 14, 'Spiders: Who's Bad, Who's Good?' on October 30, and 'Termites 101 for Homeowners' on December 9. The poster is decorated with illustrations of a butterfly, a spider, a ladybug, and a bee. It is presented by Molly Keck, Integrated Pest Management Program Specialist & Entomologist for Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bexar County. All programs will be held 2-4pm at the Bexar County AgriLife Extension Office, 3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 208, San Antonio, TX 78230. For more information, contact Molly or Aurelia at 210/467-6575 or mekeck@ag.tamu.edu. A small disclaimer at the bottom states: 'We will seek to provide reasonable accommodations for our events for all persons with disabilities. We request that you contact our office at least two weeks in advance of an event to advise us of the auxiliary aid or service that you require. Education programs of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.'

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