



# Pest e-alerts



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## Current NW Oklahoma Wildfires and the USDA Imported Fire Ant Quarantine

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The current massive range wildfires in northwest Oklahoma have caused a shortage of forage to sustain surviving livestock. Ranchers and farmers from outside the extensively damaged areas are shipping hay and feed into these non-quarantine fire-devastated counties. Concerning the **Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA)**; scientific name *Solenopsis invicta*, also known as the Imported Fire Ant (IFA), the USDA-APHIS has placed restrictions against hay and straw movement out of quarantine counties in southern Oklahoma. ODAFF maintains a Facebook page with recent information about hay donations and **RIFA** (see below). A June 1, 2016, map of USA **RIFA** quarantine counties is also included below. Hay being moved out of quarantine counties that does not meet the conditions listed below must be certified **RIFA**-free by either federal or state inspection before being shipped. It would be prudent that the very helpful and greatly appreciated ranchers and farmers that are shipping hay or other materials to the fire-ravaged areas be sure to ship from non-quarantine counties, or otherwise take action to be certain all shipped materials are **RIFA**-free.

### OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105

#### USDA Expands Imported Fire Ant Quarantine Area in Oklahoma

For More Information Contact:

Mr. Kenny Naylor, Director of Consumer Protection Services, ODAFF. (405) 522-5879.

ODAFF Facebook: <http://www.oda.state.ok.us/odaff-followus.htm>

**ODAFF Facebook comments:** As many of you are aware, hay donations are being accepted for producers impacted by recent wildfires. Just as a reminder, there are counties in southern Oklahoma and northern Texas that are included in the imported fire ant quarantine.

Following is information from USDA/APHIS regarding under what conditions baled hay can leave a quarantine area without restrictions:

Baled hay that meets any of the requirements below is not regulated and has no movement restrictions:

- For baled hay that is stacked, all bales except the bottom layer that is in direct contact with the ground.
- Hay that is cut, baled, loaded, and shipped without storage.
- Baled hay that is stored on an impervious surface such as hard pan (highly compressed soil), asphalt, concrete, etc.
- Baled hay that is stored elevated above the soil on pallets or tires or stored on landscaping cloth placed over the soil.

If you have additional questions before moving hay, please contact Kenny Naylor, Director of Consumer Protections Services for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry: [Kenny.naylor@ag.ok.gov](mailto:Kenny.naylor@ag.ok.gov) , (405) 522-5879. If you are not in the imported fire ant quarantine area, these restrictions do not apply.

For more Q & A on baled hay movement, please go to:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/BaledHayIndustryAlert.pdf> [Document also attached separately]

Map of current Quarantine Area: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/.../firan.../downloads/fireant-2.pdf>

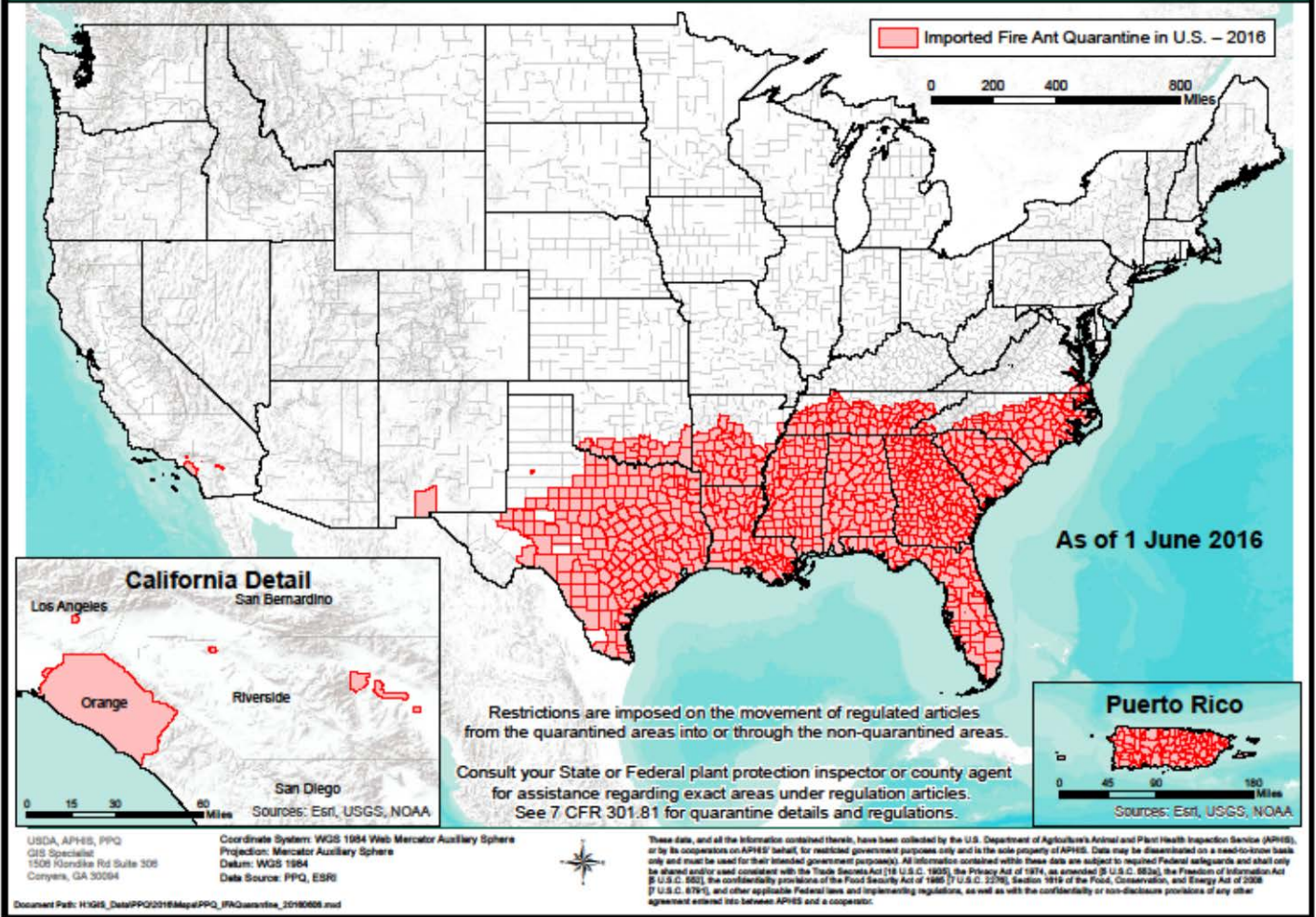


ODAFF



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

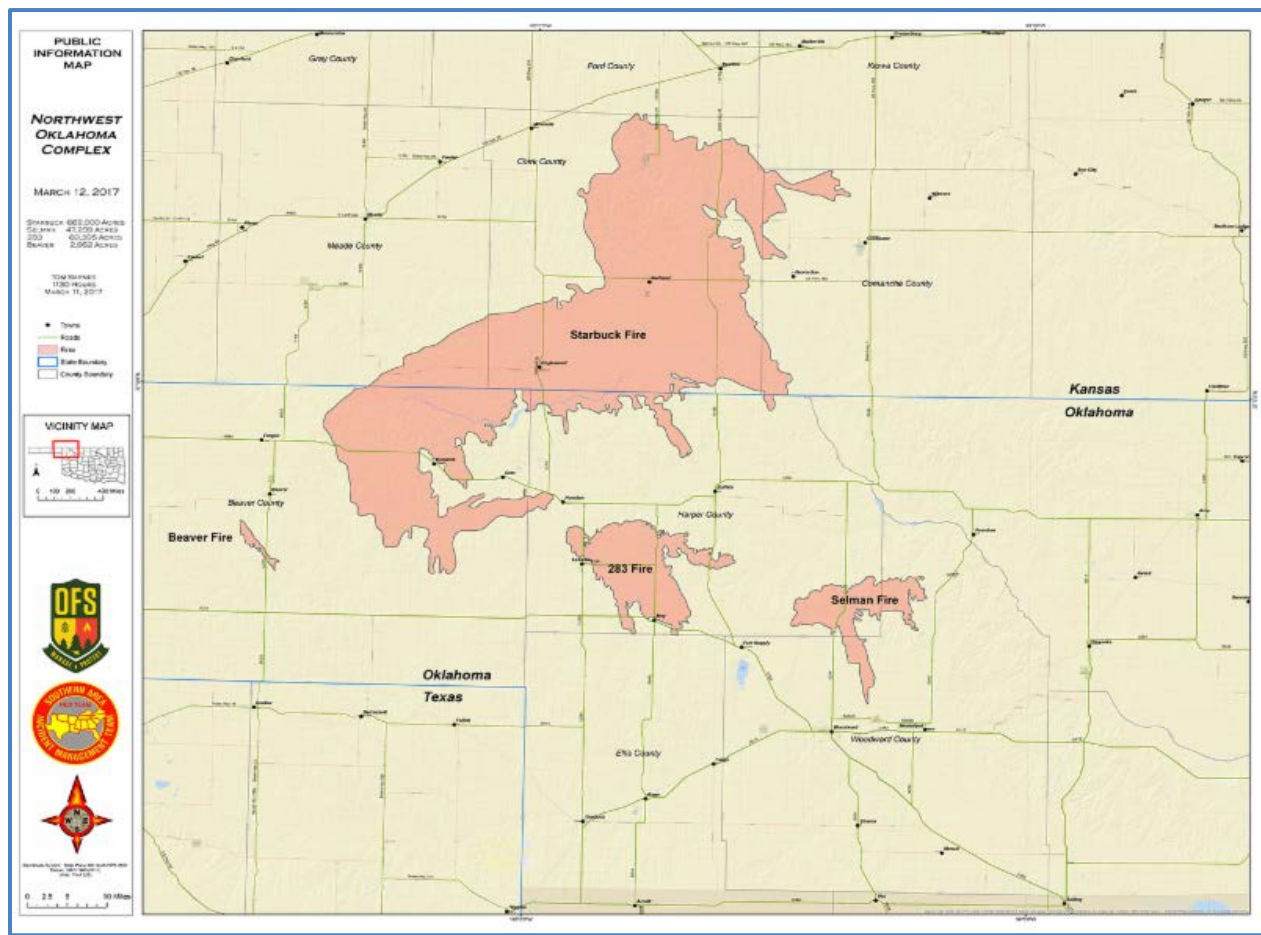
# Imported Fire Ant Quarantine



ODAFF

## Hay Drop-Off Locations

Place	Location	Contact Name/Number
Buffalo Feeders	Location: 4 miles east of Buffalo, OK on Highway 64	Caleb Nelson 580-727-1332
Tyree Ag	US-283, Laverne, OK just over 1 mile North of Stop Light last business north side of Laverne East side of the road	Jay Dee Nielsen 580-334-6819
Dale Long	1 mile east, ½ mile North, ½ mile East of Gate, OK	Dale Long 580-571-1249
May Coop Elevator	May Oklahoma	Tom Fanning 580-727-5530
Buffalo Coop	322 E Harper, Buffalo, OK 73834	Beverly Mings 580-735-2533
Western Equipment	3999 Lakeview Drive, Woodward, OK	Caleb Zook 580-254-0080



March 12, 2017 Fire Complex Map – ODAFF

**Red Imported Fire Ant worker (Sometimes called the Imported Fire Ant-IFA)**

Fire ant colonies contain several sizes of workers, ranging in length from 1/8 to 1/4 inch (3.5 to 7.0 mm; antennas not included). They have a painful sting, and can extensively infest pastures and rangeland with numerous mounds that can damage farm equipment. They also cause damage to highways, roadways and airport runways, and readily infest electrical meter boxes and equipment. They can easily attack and kill small livestock like chickens, and ground-nesting birds. They currently infest more than 250 million acres in six southeastern states, and millions of additional acres as they spread west and north. Their current range is extensive as illustrated on the map above. **RIFAs** are prolific reproducers, and one infested acre of land can produce more than 90,000 new queens each year. Swarming occurs several times per year, thereby extending the RIFA range to many more acres.

There are several commercial insecticides and toxic baits available that kill **RIFA**. Treating individual mounds wherever they are found is recommended. However, when hundreds-to-many thousands of **RIFA** colonies and mounds are established, control within pastures and rangeland becomes a difficult, continuous challenge.

**Red Imported Fire Ant Worker - RIFA**



Top View

1/8 to 1/4 inch



Left Side View

Photos Courtesy of R. A. Grantham

**RIFA Identification**

If ants are found on hay and feed or other materials being shipped into the wildfire areas, the ants should be collected into a small container and brought to their local County Extension Office for identification. They can also be identified on-site by ODAFF or Federal inspectors to be sure they are not **RIFA**. In addition, The Plant Disease and Insect Diagnostic Laboratory (PDIDL) in OSU's Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology can provide positive **RIFA** identification. Only dead ants can be sent to PDIDL. Ants can be killed by freezing or by placing them in rubbing alcohol. Contact PDIDL, Dept. EPP, 127 NRC, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078-3033. Office: 405-744-9961; fax: 405-744-6039. <http://entopl.okstate.edu/pddl/pddl/pdidl-form.pdf> provides the short insect ID request form. Very clear, high-resolution Digital Images are sometimes adequate for ant identification. Send images and the request form by email: [sickplants@okstate.edu](mailto:sickplants@okstate.edu). However, to positively identify the very small RIFA, physical specimens must be received by the PDIDL.

## RIFA Management

The best time to inspect hay bales for **RIFA** is at their point-of-origin, before loading onto trucks. However, if RIFA-infested bales are identified at 'drop-off' locations or feeding sites, ODAFF inspectors should be immediately notified for instructions on addressing the infestation and disposition or treatment of areas around **RIFA** infested bales. If hay is received from an out-of-**RIFA** quarantine area, the same guidelines listed above by ODAFF should be followed.

There are several commercial insecticides and toxic baits available that control **RIFA**. Treating individual **RIFA** mounds with insecticide coupled with a broadcast application of **RIFA** bait that is approved for pastures is recommended. If **RIFA**-infested bale(s) of hay are identified, it is recommended that these bale(s) be either shipped back to the point-of-origin or placed in a separate area at the drop-off location. For RIFA infested bales remaining at the drop-off location, one control method that has been proven effective is scattering Extinguish+® fire ant bait on the soil around the infested bales, then applying a perimeter treatment around the entire hay storage area with Sevin® (DO NOT APPLY ANY OF THESE PRODUCTS DIRECTLY ON ANY HAY BALE). Currently, there are no approved insecticides that can be applied directly on hay bales intended for immediate consumption by cattle or other livestock. If hay bales become **RIFA** infested after being placed into cattle feeding areas, then remove the animals and treat the areas with Extinguish+® or Amdro Pro®. Livestock must not be fed in these treated areas until at least 7 days after treatment.

Extinguish® is another successful RIFA bait that can be used. It is recommended that the soil areas immediately adjacent to infested bales be treated at a rate of 1.0- to 1.5-pounds per acre just like RIFA infested pasture would be treated. This ensures that any foraging ants can take the bait and feed it to their nest mates. The difference between Extinguish and Extinguish+ is that Extinguish does not work as rapidly as Extinguish+, but there is no waiting period for grazing or harvest with Extinguish.

Be sure to follow label directions when using RIFA baits or any other pesticides. When bales in the bait-treated areas are re-inspected and deemed RIFA-free, they can be used to feed livestock.

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**Editors: Eric Rebek, Ph.D., and Justin Talley, Ph.D.**

**Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

The pesticide information presented in this publication was current with federal and state regulations at the time of printing. The user is responsible for determining that the intended use is consistent with the label of the product being used. Use pesticides safely. Read and follow label directions. The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.

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## Questions and Answers for Producers, Sellers, and Buyers of Baled Hay Moving From Areas Under Quarantine for Imported Fire Ant

Through its regulations to prevent the movement and establishment of the imported fire ant, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) seeks to facilitate the safe movement of agricultural products and commodities, including baled hay, out of areas under quarantine for the pest. USDA's goal is to help support commerce, while guarding against the further spread of the imported fire ant.

Weather conditions can prompt farmers to seek sources of hay for their livestock that may include hay from suppliers within areas of the country under quarantine for imported fire ant. While some hay produced in these areas is regulated from moving outside of the quarantine zone, most hay can move without restriction. In addition, there are simple steps hay growers and suppliers inside the quarantine area for imported fire ant can take to ensure their product can move quickly and easily to where it's needed by farmers and livestock. APHIS is providing the following information to help respond to questions from farmers, ranchers, hay growers, and suppliers, as well as our State plant health regulatory partners, as they work to respond to adverse weather conditions and find important feed sources for livestock.

### Q. What is the quarantine zone for imported fire ant?

**A.** Most of the southeastern United States is currently under quarantine. In addition, most of Texas, southern Oklahoma, all of Dona Ana County in New Mexico, all of Orange County and parts of Los Angeles and Riverside counties in California, and all of Puerto Rico are under quarantine. To determine whether you are in a quarantine area, visit USDA's Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/fireants/zipcode.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/zipcode.shtml) and click the "Check your zip code now" link.

### Q. Under what conditions can baled hay leave the quarantine area without restrictions?

**A.** Baled hay that meets any of the requirements below is not regulated and has no movement restrictions:

- For baled hay that is stacked, all bales **except** the bottom layer that is in direct contact with the ground.
- Hay that is cut, baled, loaded, and shipped without storage.
- Baled hay that is stored on an impervious surface such as hard pan (highly compressed soil), asphalt, concrete, etc.
- Baled hay that is stored elevated above the soil on pallets or tires or stored on landscaping cloth placed over the soil.

### Q. What kind of hay is regulated in these areas for imported fire ant?

**A.** In quarantine areas, USDA only regulates baled hay and baled straw that are stored in direct contact with the ground, because it poses a risk for harboring imported fire ants. This hay can move anywhere within the quarantine area. In addition, hay or straw from inside the quarantine area that is stored in direct contact with the ground **can** move outside the quarantine area provided it has been inspected, found free of imported fire ant, and travels with a certificate or permit issued by the State department of agriculture or local USDA office.

You can find contact information for State departments of agriculture on the National Plant Board's Web site at [nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html](http://nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html). For local USDA offices, visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/StateOffices](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/StateOffices). In addition, any hay that contains soil may not leave the quarantine area.

### Q. What are some best management practices for baled hay storage that reduce the chance of fire ants infesting the hay?

**A.** The best management approach is to reduce or eliminate fire ants on the property annually. Your local Extension specialist can provide guidance on how to accomplish this. To find contact information for your local Extension office, visit [www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension). In addition, the following storage practices can help reduce the risk of moving infested hay and straw:

- Applying fire ant bait (insecticide) around the outside of hay storage areas.



- Storing hay on an impervious surface such as asphalt, concrete, or hard pan.
- Elevating hay in the field onto a pallet or tire or placing it on landscaping cloth so it is not in direct contact with the ground.
- If available, requesting an inspection by a State inspector to certify that the hay is free of fire ants.

Before the hay leaves the quarantine area, the shipper should place food such as a hot dog or peanut butter on a card close to the loaded bales on the trailer and then check for ants after an hour or so.

**Q. What should buyers do when purchasing hay produced within a quarantine area?**

**A.** When placing the order, determine if the supplier is within the quarantine area for imported fire ant. To do so, visit USDA's Web site at [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/fireants/zipcode.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/zipcode.shtml) and click the "Check your zip code now" link. Also, ask the supplier for hay that does not have fire ants, and visually inspect the hay bales when they are delivered to you. If possible, request that the hay be certified for movement by the State from which it is shipped.

If you find any ants, contact your State department of agriculture or local Extension office. You can find contact information for State departments of agriculture on the National Plant Board's Web site at [nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html](http://nationalplantboard.org/member/index.html). For local Extension offices, visit [www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension).

**Q. What threat does the imported fire ant pose to agriculture?**

**A.** Imported fire ants are destructive to agriculture and dangerous to animals and people. These ants will feed on the buds and fruits of numerous crop plants, especially corn, soybean, okra, and citrus. They can also girdle young trees. Large nests located in fields interfere with and damage equipment during cultivation and harvesting. Imported fire ants respond rapidly and aggressively to disturbances, and ant attacks inhibit field-worker activities. A single fire ant can sting its target repeatedly. Young and newborn animals are especially susceptible to the venom of these stings.

For more information on imported fire ants and APHIS' regulations, please visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/fireants/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/index.shtml).

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