

Fire Ants in Hemp

► These little pests can cause big problems in hemp production. What can you do to protect your crop from these angry ants?

Identification

- Dark red to brown in color.
- Narrow waist with two bumps.

The Life of a Fire Ant

- The four life stages are egg, larva, pupa, and adult.
- Most colonies have more than 200,000 workers. They live in mounds that are a maze of underground tunnels.
- Fire ants work together to protect their brood and queen.
- Fire ants are **aggressive**.
- If their mound is threatened, they will sting anything that is near the mound.

Damage

- They form mounds at or near the plant base.
- The mites tunnel through stems and cut off nutrients to the plants.
- Plants may wilt and yellow or even die after fire ant damage.
- By the time plant damage is noticed, the ants have likely moved their mound to nearby plants.



Management

To manage fire ants, you must **kill the queen**. There are two options for controlling fire ants: **baits** and **mound treatments**. Which is better?*

Bait

How it works: Foraging ants take the bait back to the mound. Other ants, including the queen, eat the bait.

- **Pro:** More effective control; more economical on a large scale.
- **Con:** Control may take several weeks.

Mound Treatments

How it works: Applied directly to the mound and kills the ants.

- **Pro:** Faster than bait.
- **Con:** May fail to kill the queen.

**Use only pesticides that are approved for hemp by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. Find a complete list of these pesticides in the IPM section of the Alabama Extension website.*