



Season 1 Episode 9—Managing Fire Ants

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Announcer

Welcome to the *Southern Ground* podcast provided by Alabama Extension through Auburn University. Extension educators Shane Harris and Dr. Chip East discuss seasonal lawn and garden topics, address common questions, and provide the practical solutions you want to know. Let's dig in to our southern ground.

Shane Harris

Hello everyone, and welcome to *Southern Ground*. I'm Shane Harris with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. And joining me here is fellow horticulturist Dr. Chip East. Hello, Chip.

Chip East

Hey, Shane. How are you today?

Shane Harris

I'm doing well. And we're here to do another podcast on another great topic. It's an important topic as we're going deal with managing the fire ants in our yards and pastures and gardens, and everywhere else we can find them.

Chip East

A lot of time and money is spent trying to manage fire ants. So that's a good topic to discuss.

Shane Harris

It's a big seasonal topic here in the spring. In particular in the Deep South. Fire ants is a is a menace. It is a problem. It probably is the number one insect that we have trouble controlling. We get calls on that throughout the year. We personally witnessed that, kicking up a mound getting stung. Children getting stung. They're in the garden. They're in the lawn. They're on the side of the road. Sometimes they can be in the house, but they they are definitely a major insect pest that we will have to learn how to control properly.

Chip East

And they can be anywhere, like you say. And I work some with athletic turf, and you can't play a football game. It's just not safe. If you have mounds out there and there's been there's been times that football games have been called off because of fire ants on the field, and I work a lot with, pick your own strawberries or pick your own blueberries.

It really gets you when it's blueberries all the time. They're so active in the summer. But when a young person, a kid mom is out there with trying to pick berries and the kids and the kids get stung, they go home. They would normally pick a few more berries or pick another gallon or two, but it's, it's it's tough in those situations.

And there's certain things labeled for those areas and certain things we shouldn't use in those areas. And that's what we can discuss today.

Shane Harris

There everywhere, like we talked about, we see them in in the home vegetable garden. We see them in the home lawn. We see them on playgrounds. We see more athletic fields. They're in horse pastures, hayfields, orchards, pecan orchards. You can't even have a picnic sometimes without running into a fire ant mound.

Chip East

Going camping. And there they are. I know somebody that had trouble with his air conditioning unit outside, and it was because of fire ant.

Shane Harris

Believe it or not, here from Alabama, we are known for the fire ants. They came in Mobile, Alabama, to the port in around 1918, according to history. So we've had fire ants in Alabama in the southeast for now for over 100 years, Chip.

Chip East

And they know how to spread too, Shane. They're all over Alabama and obviously a lot of southeastern states. But they're popping up certain places across the country that had never had fire ants before. But through moving cross ties, through moving plants and things like that. Places that normally wouldn't had fire ants that, there they are.

Shane Harris

We're talking about the black imported fire ant and the red imported fire ant. There are two different species. Most people cannot really tell the difference. We're not going to get an in depth from an identification standpoint, but some of our Extension publications from other universities, other land grant universities reports, there's over 250 million acres have been infested by fire ants, for now over 100 years.

Chip East

You know, we'll go count on a acre of land just out in the pasture. How many ants? How many mounds are in this area? In this hundred acres or whatever? Well, they will count. There'll be 40 or 50 mounds per acre. Well, some places have more than that. That's just averages.

I was at a place in the county, I was on a Christmas tree farm and just think about it. Even when you cut in a Christmas tree, Thanksgiving or later in the year, you put your knee down on the ground and disturbed a mound, you got to use that saw they'll build mounds up around the trunk. And that's where we got to cut- their active even if it's a warmer day, they're active even at that time of year.

But anyway, I was on a Christmas tree farm doing a treatment. We were doing an experiment, you see, and we was counting the mounds. And again, we got 40 or 50 mounds per acre at that farm. I think I could have walked across if I didn't, if I wanted to step on every fire ant mound, I think I could have walked across the field and never touch the ground, just been on a fire ant bed. They were between 70 and 80 mounds per acre at that farm.

Shane Harris

That is a lot. That's a lot to treat. That's a lot to manage. That's a lot to deal with. Even just, like I said, walking through that, to deal with if you're managing for cattle or hay, that's a major that's a major pest. So as we look at the fire ants and think about- hopefully everybody's seen a fire ant mound. You'd be surprised how many children and people who are not from the South have never experienced fire ants. Well, when you get into fire ants and they sting and bite, you'll know what they are in the future. But everybody recognizes them. Here in the southeast is those, I call it the just a mound of dirt, mound of red clay here for for this part of Alabama. That's a fire ant mound. It's very distinctive.

Once you've seen it, once you've known it, you know what that fire ants mound. And if you disturb that fire ant, there's thousands of thousands of workers that come out to attack. Those workers are actually female. But somewhere in that mound is a queen. And as we talk about controlling fire ants or managing fire ants, we're not going to be able to control and eliminate fire ants, but we can manage them. We have to manage the Queen in addition to those workers.

Chip East

The Queen's laying several hundred eggs a day. So just managing the workers is not going to stop that, mound. We've got to get to the Queen. That is true and there's ways to do it. But you got to understand the fire ant biology, to understand the ways to, to get to that queen.

Shane Harris

So time of the year is going to be very important to managing fire ants. As we do this podcast in early spring, mid spring that you're going to begin to start seeing more mounds pop up as we have more moisture. And as those mounds begin to expand, you have new colonies spread. You're going to see a high population boom of fire ants in the yards, in the pastures and elsewhere. So that's going to be the time to start controlling them when they're active like this.

Chip East

If you've ever disturbed a mound, cut grass or knocked one open with a stick or kicked one, I guess a lot of kids do that. Sometimes you'll see these fire ants with wings, and a lot of people think they're termites or something like that. And there is a difference that the fire ants' wings is not the same size. They have two pair, but they're not the same size that but anyway. They call those Alates. They're winged adults, and half can be male, half can be female in a mature mound. And that it takes several months to have a mature mound, but you can have 2,000 to 4,000 winged adults in that mound. And this happens in April, May, June, this when it warms up.

Well, first, it can happen any time of year, but mostly it's April, May, June at least in Alabama. They fly. They mate. Then this female comes back. She's not a queen yet. Or she comes back and she buries in the ground and starts laying eggs and tends to them. Then when she has workers, then you change your title, she becomes a queen.

Takes several weeks just to make a small mound. The colony's been there for a while, but you don't see that mound. It could be at least four weeks before you see that mound.

Shane Harris

This is the reason why we see someone's yard going from having no fire ants to having several mounds pop up what seemed like overnight. We see this a lot. After a spring shower, you will see small mounds of soil, but as that queen lays more eggs and the colony expands those fire ant mounds to become much larger and larger and more prominent in that yard.

Chip East

During these mating flights, the male and females, they fly, they mate, and they're attracted to shiny objects. So a lot of these potential queens or these ants fly back, and they're attracted to fishponds, the roofs of buildings, swimming pools, highways, the land in back of pickup trucks. By far most of them die, they do not make it.

And one thing that kills an ant is another fire ant, their territorial. But the few that make it, and it's a very small percentage, Those are the it's still a high number. And those are the ones we're concerned with. I was fishing one day, though. I heard something just hitting the boat. Tick tick tick. Just hitting the boat every now and then.

And it was these winged adults, these Alates were flying back. Were hitting the boat. Look in the water- the water's covered in them. It was still. And you could just see them all in the water. And so, you know, a lot of

them do not make it, but that's what they're attracted to. We get a calls a lot sometimes about people's swimming pools.

Shane Harris

Yeah. And we've had calls before people complaining about the fish dying from possibly stings from those ants. Haven't had any calls like that recently, but I've heard those stories over the years, so they're definitely a problem everywhere, including even a possibly a fishpond.

Chip, as we begin to think about how to manage these fire ants, they're a problem. They, they sting and bite. And they called whelps. And they're, they're just they're everywhere. As you begin to start looking for ideas in control methods, let me encourage you to look at the right resources. Through us, the Extension Service, Alabama Cooperative Extension System here in Alabama through Auburn University in Alabama, Alabama A&M University, or any land-grant university across the nation can provide information for managing pest.

We have several good partners throughout the southeast that are that specialize in fire ant control, and a lot of them will put out bulletins and publications, information, even on social media. One recently I saw was the home remedies. We get, we see a lot of that. People think they can use other things than to control ants besides the registered insecticides.

Let's first talk about gasoline. Gasoline has been used for a long time as a control method. Kick the mound over, pour little gas on there and it wipes up the mound. That's illegal.

Chip East

That's an illegal use of gasoline. And definitely not recommended by any university.

Shane Harris

That is a misuse of the product. It's also a fire hazard. You could blow yourself up. There's been lots of stories of people causing fires and they're, you know, causing lots damage, property and personal damage, even dying from that. So gasoline, any type of petroleum product, it doesn't matter if it's gasoline or diesel fuel or any kind of product like that is not an insecticide and is not recommended.

Shane Harris

Another one we see a lot is grits. And here in the South, that's corn meal. Uncooked grits is one that we see often that's recommended. Just go out there and sprinkle the grits on top of the mound straight out the bag. I don't think they have to be cooked up for breakfast or anything, but just go out there, sprinkle them over there, and the ants supposedly come get these grits and swell up and die.

Chip East

Eat them, and they swell up in the die. Well, the thing about an ant biology is the fire ant, they have a complete life cycle: egg, larva, pupa, then adult. And as you kick that mound open, it'd be hard to find the eggs. They're tiny, but you could. But you'll see the white different stages of the larva, well you'll see the pupa, too, but the

larva that that's the last stage of the larva. The ants have a plate in their mouth that prevents them from eating solid food. They have to take the food, give it to this last stage of this larva. They take the food in, digest it, spit it back up, and then the other ants feed from there. So even if they did swell and die, you're killing a larva, not the queen. So that that's a myth that doesn't work and not recommended.

Shane Harris

Fire ants basically have a liquid diet they don't eat solid food is how we how we explain that best. Another method you sometimes see or hear about is club soda. People think they can just pour that club soda on the fire ant mound, and that will instantly kill them. I don't know if they're trying to drown them or if they're supposed to kill them, but that's not an effective method that that doesn't work. That's that. Club soda is also not labeled for fire ant control.

Chip East

And even treating individual mounds. Again, we've said when you see a mound there today and it was not there yesterday... in a drought, there's colonies that they're just deeper because of moisture. You can have a rain and they pop up, but they were there before the rain. They just they didn't have that mound at that point in time.

But when that's a young colony that and built a mound yet. How do you treat that colony when you can't even see it? Well, that's why I don't like individual mound treatment.

Shane Harris

The last one that's very popular is boiling hot water. Go out there and boil some water on the stove, and then very carefully go out there and pour it on a fire mound, maybe do kick the mound open. Maybe you don't. But boiling water can be very dangerous. Yes, any boiling water will kill those ants when it makes contact with them, but that's not going to provide a long-term control.

That's just going to be a very short temporary control. We're not really killing the queen. They're going to protect that queen even under that type of attack. But even several gallons of water is going to be needed to really drown that mound or kill that mound.

Chip East

Kill the grass in that spot, too. And once you have and when you have 50 mounds per acre, just think of how many gallons of boiling water you're going to need. And if you think about the expense and time, that is just not a recommended practice that I would tell anyone to do.

Shane Harris

It's also a little dangerous. You're dealing with boiling water. You can spill it on yourself. You could trip, just there's other methods. It's much more effective that we're going back to talk about.

Chip East

Shane, another, myth is I know someone that saved their chewing tobacco could use their spit and would go pour that bucket out on the fire. It may. I'm thinking that would, manage their ants.

Shane Harris

And I think the story goes, is that the queen would take that chewing tobacco, and when she would come up to spit, you would have to step on her and kill her.

Chip East

That would work, wouldn't it?

Shane Harris

If you can get her to come out there and spit. Having a little humor here, folks, these methods that you see on the internet or someone tells you word of mouth or that you read somewhere, or even tall tales, you got to go to a source, a proven source, that's recommended, that's effective. As Chip mentioned earlier, its expensive and is very time consuming to manage fire ants.

And so we're going to now move into what should you do, what could you do? What are the recommended steps for controlling fire ants. And that's going to be using a proper insecticide based on the situation.

Chip East

And I'll narrow them down to two. And we will call them a contact insecticide or a bait. And a lot of the contact insecticides do work. But we've got to treat individual mounds. And again 40 or 50 or more mounds per acre. How many acres are we treating? That can get expensive. Shane, we'll go to the farm supply places, retail garden centers and look at the contact and the baits for fire ants.

Read how to use it. Calculate how much per acre. Again, 40 or 50 mounds for treating individual mounds or broadcast treatment and kind of calculate how much it cost per acre. And we will get some very, very different- It can go from \$20 an acre, sometimes less, to several hundred dollars an acre, sometimes more. Well, what's best, whether they both can work.

But one cost a lot more money than another. A lot of times I like to recommend a bait and then follow that up with if you had problem mounds right there by your door or something like that with a contact, but don't go out over this large area we're trying to treat with contact insecticides. They do work, but you've got to go to every mound.

So if you had a problem mound right there by first base, I might use it there. But I'd really rather use a broadcast bait over a larger area.

Shane Harris

Chip, sometimes these are based on the situation. Where are the fire ants? Are they in the vegetable garden? Are they on the baseball field or the playground? Are they in the horse pasture? Are they in the home lawn? You

know, are they in the park? That situation dictates what action to take and also will dictate what insecticide can be used in that particular area.

For example, you mentioned contact insecticides or doing a mound treatment. If you're having problems with fire ants on the playground where children are playing or if you have on the athletic field when you're having a football or baseball game or softball game going on, or even band, then you need an immediate control.

Let's say you got a wedding coming up and the weddings will be on the lawn area, or a nice grassy area to take photographs and have the ceremony, you need that fire ant control right now. So in that case go to a mound treatment or a contact insecticide to eliminate them now. That's not going to provide a long-term control, but that will be a short-term relief.

Chip East

Most of the baits work so slow and there is one I can think of that works faster, but it is a lot more money. But a lot of them work so slow and it's over a, you know, 2 to 4 weeks. Some of them are up to ten weeks.

Well, let's talk about what a bait is. It's usually a ground up, it can be corn cob grain of some kind. And that's just the carrier that they're picking up either in a stomach poison or the insecticide. Sometimes we have an insect growth regulator. And the difference between those two, one might be a stomach poison type thing that actually kills it. The other one is a insect growth regulator. What it would do is prevents the queen's eggs from developing.

So those take a longer time to work. They have to die of old age. The reason it worked the some of the others. The stomach poisons work slow. If it killed instantly, what are you killing again? Again, the larva. So we've got to let them digest it. Spit it back up and the queen and the workers get it. So it does work over a longer period of time.

So that's the difference between the few weeks two, three, four weeks and then some 8- 10 weeks. They have to die of old age in the case of the insect growth regulator. And it depends on what time of year you are or how long some of these work.

Shane Harris

A lot of this is confusing, so you need to definitely refer to a publication or some other literature to break this down, because things are situational. There are different type of treatments, there's different long, there's different periods of time. But a bait is typically broadcast over a large area. The ants go get the bait, that corncob with the insecticide attached to it, and take it back to the mound versus the mound treatment. You're going directly to the mound where they're visible.

So, one advantage of the baits is there may be colonies, new colonies in the spring that you're not aware of. There may be colonies in the fall that you're not aware of, but that broadcasting of that bait will allow you to do a treatment for a large area and provide that long term control. And so when you apply for those baits, you're almost applying it like fertilizer or you're spreading out on a large area.

Chip East

In what makes the ant come get it, because it's not the carrier and it's not the insecticide that's on there. They put some kind of, I'll say vegetable oil, but some kind of cheap oil in that, and the oil is what makes that ant want to pick it up and bring it back to the mound, which is important because it's the oil these things have a shelf life and it's the oil that goes bad.

If you were buying butter at the store today, you wouldn't go buy it on your way to work and let it sit in a hot car. What's it going to be like when you get home? Is it any good or you wouldn't buy milk and leave it? And you, you have to keep these baits at certain temperatures. If you buy bait and put it in your car and rides around for a week, even a day, it may not be any good because the oil is bad, so it's not going to work.

I hear a lot, 'Well, I tried that it didn't work.' It'll tell you on the bag that won't work. The temperatures have to be right. It's got to be good bait to start with.

Shane Harris

I also think people have different expectations when they buy a fire ant product. There's so many on the shelf. You see fire ant products, labeled for fire ants- kill fire ants, may have a picture of a fire ants on that particular product. People are will buy the wrong product thinking this is a contact insecticide is a mound treatment and this can provide long term control.

Or they buy something that they think is a bait and they don't see the results immediately like they will with the contact insecticide. So part of that is the confusion with the with the homeowners or the customer is what are the expectations? So it goes back to what I said earlier. What do you need to be accomplished now? Do you need something immediate or do you need something long term and that and where is it? That dictates what you're going to buy.

Let's get into some sensitive areas, Chip, such as vegetable gardens where we have fruits because as we start breaking these insecticides down, we have short term and long term, we have mound control or contact, we have baits. And then we also have those sensitive areas where like vegetables versus home lawns, some products are labeled for these areas. Some may not be labeled at all for those areas.

Chip East

That's right. And you know, we're not eating anything in that on that home lawn. But we are out of the vegetable garden. We talked earlier, Shane, about the there's different prices per acre of what it cost to manage ants. Well, to make a long story short, the fire ant baits are usually by far the cheapest method of managing ants. And I highly recommend that whether it's the home situation or the athletic turf or the fruit and vegetable farmer, I would use the baits. That is the cheapest method.

Shane Harris

And when it comes to long term, the most effective.

Chip East

The most effective as well. And, but the baits have and again, it's that oil that goes bad, they have a shelf life. If I bought a bait last fall, it's probably not good this spring. If I buy one today, it might not be good tomorrow if I let it get too hot, or for whatever reason. Once I open the bag, I need to use it that day.

And some of these, they only sell these baits in 25-pound bags. We put a pound to a pound and a half per acre. We need to treat 25 acres, maybe more. If you're not treating that much at one time, we got to figure out a different -don't buy the 25-pound bag and think we're going to keep it for several years.

Now, Shane, tell us how do we apply? If we need to put something in you need to read the label of the bait. But a lot of them will say a pound to a pound and a half per acre. How do we apply a pound and a half of a product on an acre basis?

Shane Harris

The best way to broadcast a bait is first, make sure it's the right temperature. Most of these baits are picked up when the ants are foraging. That's usually between 60 and 90 degrees. Now how do you know the ants are foraging? Well, one trick we've learned from fire ant trainings and demonstrations, even some of our workshops, we have to go out there and take potato chip, you can even use a hot dog weenie and put it out there and go back in a few minutes to see if the ants are now on those potato chips. They're attracted to the oil on those potato chips as well.

Chip East

I wait ten minutes or so and if it's a hot day, sunshine, I put them in the shade, but I don't even have to put it next to a mound. Just put it out in the yard or the site. You wait ten minutes and if they're actively foraging, they'll be wrapped up. Now, if it's cool or extremely hot and there's only 1 or 2 ants after 10 or 20 minutes, I wouldn't be applying my bait. My bait is only good for a few hours, so I want to make for certain the ants are foraging before I put that bait out.

Shane Harris

So once you've found that the ants are foraging looking for food, they'll readily take up the bait. So go out there and broadcast that bait, and you get those small handheld spreader, something like you would do for small seeds. And you put the bait in there and only per square footage, you only need about ten flakes per square foot. It's very little. You don't need a lot of broadcast. You don't need a lot of dust. You're not it's not like broadcasting fertilizer that you want to see so much. You only need just a few pellets, really, per square footage. That's all the ants are going to need to take it to the queen.

Chip East

And it's actually it's not like fertilizer so that you have to put it everywhere. If you skip this corner or that corner, sometimes we'll do a swath and skip a swath, do a swath, skip a swath. The ants go get it. They forage and they go get what they need. And we can treat, we can make our bait go twice as far by doing that.

But yeah, most people a lot of times we put out too much. But if you can see it being slung out of your spreader, I hate to say it's hard to say that and be right every time, but you're probably putting too much. It's very little coming out and that's a handheld seeder.

The seeders we use on the back of ATVs and things like that, they make some that are specific for putting out fire ant baits. We have some at some of our Extension offices. They have a plate in it that prevents, so only so much fire ant bait can go through this little plate to be applied. If you don't have this plate in there, it doesn't work. We can't spread it like we're spreading fertilizer or something. It's not going to work.

Shane Harris

One of the advantage of fire baits is the ants do all the work. You just broadcast it, they go get it. They take it back to the mound, the existing mound and the hidden mounds. And they control those ants, the controlled populations of those ants, and provide that long term control. So that's a lot easier, a more effective than running from mound to mound to mound. And as we talked about more affordable.

Chip East

Absolutely. The ants will go as far as they need to to get what they need. And Kathy Flanders was our one of our, retired entomologist. But when she was with us, she did a study and they were using different fire ant baits, having this big pasture, they do a strip of this fire ant bait. Then they'd skip 100ft and do another strip of this different fire ant bait. Then they'd skip 100ft and so on. It was a dry year. They killed all the ants in between those two strips because, and again, we knew they were going 100ft. Some of them were going a long way to get what they needed.

Shane Harris

So Chip, as we wrap up this podcast, we want to talk about the proper insecticides that are currently recommended for controlling fire ants or in this case, managing fire ants. And let me clarify, our entomologist will tell us from research that we're never going to get rid of the fire ants. We're only going to try to manage those fire ants in those sensitive areas that are important to us.

Chip's got a list of insecticides for these particular areas. Some are very sensitive. And this would include mound treatments as well as a bait treatment.

Chip East

And this is not a complete list, but this is just to get you on the track of what to think about. But read the label before you buy the product. Labels change, so don't just take what I say and buy those products, Read that. Make sure your site, your site is where you're putting it on. So if you're putting on a home lawn, home lawn's got to be on the label.

If you're putting on an athletic turf, read that label. Athletic turf has to be on there. So not just does it work or not, the site has to be on the label. Read the label before you buy the product. You can do that online. You don't have to read that tiny print. I pull it up on a computer and enlarge it so I can read it.

Shane Harris

I mentioned earlier, start with the site first. Work backwards. Don't look at the product, don't go to the store and just buy a product. What is the situation first? If you're controlling vegetables, then this is the list of insecticides. These are the list of options that you have in that vegetable garden. Or if in the athletic turf, this is the options that you need to go. Or highly sensitive areas like our pastures and hayfields and with particular animals.

Chip East

So here's a few. This is not a complete list. This is just a few of the baits and areas they're sites there recommended for. So "Extinguish Professional" fire ant bait is one of my favorites. And it's an insect growth regulator. So it doesn't kill any ant. But it stops the eggs from developing and it's label for fruits, vegetables, sports turf, sod, farms, golf courses, commercial nurseries and other sites.

It's not something a homeowner would buy because they only sell it in 25 pound containers. And unless you're treating 25 acres, or even if you do that swath and skip a swath, you could treat 50 acres. But it's not something you would buy just for an acre. "Esteem" is another insect growth regulator, and it's labeled for ornamental nurseries, hospitals, apartment complexes, airports, roadside, schools, museums, sports facilities, golf courses refer to the label for specific your location.

There's an organic product called "Fertilome Come and Get It" and "Pay Back" fire ant bait is a Spinosad product, and there's other trade names it might be listed under, but it's listed for many fruits and vegetables as well as home lawns. There's a "Clinch" farming bait label for vegetables, citrus, nuts, apples, grapes, stone fruits, which is peaches, plums, strawberry, pear.

Again, every fruit may not be listed. It might list strawberry but not blueberry. So if you got blueberry, that means you can't put that one out there. Just because it listed strawberry, but it didn't list blueberries, so a blueberry farmer might not can use that. So read the label and come up with what's best for you.

Chip East

I will say there's a product that's fairly common. Probably one of the most common ones you can get is, Amdro. And Amdro, we can use that in home lawns and a lot of places. Well, and some of the formulations is for pastures with cattle and that sort of thing to read the label. It won't say fruit and vegetable on that Amdro label.

So when we were talking earlier about ants will go where they have to go to to get the bait, if I had a large blueberry farm, I would buy something labeled with blueberries on the label, and I would treat in that field when we're talking acres. If I just have two rows of blueberries, not acreage, just a little bit, or a small vegetable garden, I could use Amdro and go around the vegetable garden, go in the yard part, but not in the vegetable garden.

I could go around the orchard, but not in the orchard and help manage ants. That way, because they do sell that one in 1 pound or 2-pound containers where again, some of these others are 25-pound containers and it's could

be \$15 a pound. So, you're I mean, you might be \$300 for that 25-pound bag that you can only use it that day when you open it. So unless you're treating large acreages, it's probably not something you'll want to buy.

Shane Harris

So Chip this is a lot of information on managing fire ants. And it's even at times confusing with us to keep up what's the latest products that are out there. And these are the kind of questions that we ask homeowners and landowners, farmers and gardeners, when we have fire ants to control or to manage. What's the situation? What are you willing to spend? How much time do you have? And these are the products and methods to consider.

We've hope we've addressed this somewhat in this podcast. You definitely need to get your information and do some research on this. Go to a Extension website. Go to ours which is the Alabama Cooperative Extension System www.aces.edu or go to any of the land grant universities that are out there in the southeast that specialize in variants.

Even when you do a search online, be sure to put the Extension name there or a .edu and you'll come up with the Extension publications. Even on fire ants, you need to do your homework when it comes to managing fire ants, because as you mentioned before, it's very expensive, it's very time consuming and we want the proper results. We don't want to waste our time on things that they're not going to work, and we don't get the results when we want to. Let's take the guesswork out. You definitely can call your county Extension office nationwide to get more help on this.

Chip East

You're absolutely right. If you're spreading bad bait, your baits old, there's a way to check that bait to see it's good. The same way we check to see if they ensure foraging. We put out that cracker, potato chip or hot dog. We can put some bait out and see if they come to it. My point is, you don't want to do all this and it's not going to work from the start.

Shane Harris

It could be a painful result if it doesn't work right.

Chip East

Wasting time and money. Bottom line is to read the label. Don't put it out before or right after rain. Don't put it out before or after you cut grass when it's too cold or too hot. Wait, that that advice Shane gave about putting out that potato chip to hot dog whatever. That is the best thing to do. And you'll find that when they're foraging is when the temperatures are right and not raining and things like that.

Shane Harris

Well, we hope you've enjoyed listening to our podcast. As we discussed managing fire ants in not just in the home lawns or in the garden, but in all kind of situations. Unfortunately, fire ants are here to stay. They're part

of our lives. There's just a matter of being educated and in this case, taking the action to manage them properly and to limit their population.

Chip, thank you for all this information. We hope we have answered your questions and provided you least a little bit of some resources for you to go out there and learn how to manage fire ants.

Chip East

Great. And keep in mind, if you have a question about this or anything else, just give us a call at your local Extension office.

Shane Harris

Thank you for listening to another episode of *Southern Ground*.

Announcer

Southern Ground has been a production of Alabama Extension at Auburn University.