**Alien Invasion: Fire Ants**

**What?**

### Latin Name: Solenopsis

**American Name:** *Red Fire Ants*

### Appearance: Reddish, about 1/4-inch long.

**Habit:** Nest in mounds of 1 to 2 feet in diameter and about 1/2-foot high. Large colonies can have up to 250,000 workers. Very active and aggressive, they will sting any intruding animal repeatedly. colonies can survive temperatures as low as 16 °F (−9 °C).

### Diet: Omnivorous. Known to eat meats, greasy and sweet materials.

**Origins:** Brazil, South America.

**Where & When?**

Fire ants entered the United States in the late 1930s aboard cargo ships from tropical South America. The Cargo ships arrived in Mobile, Alabama, and fire ants immediately migrated throughout the United States.

**Consequnces:**

* Fire Ants are known for their aggressive behaviours, swarming and attacking anyone or anything that’s disturbing their nests and sometimes killing them.
* They get into homes, schools, athletic fields and parks.
* They damage crops and electrical equipment due to their mound-building activity damaging plant roots thus costing billions of dollars each year in repairs and eradication.
* US$5 billion each year on medical treatment for people that have been stung and veterinary bills and livestock loss.
* Their sting has venom, rarely causing death to humans and large animals. However, they can kill small birds and sometimes kill new born calves if they don’t get to their feet quick enough.
* Fire ants are excellent natural predators and are biological controls for pests. However, they also kill beneficial [pollinators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pollinator) such as bees.
* Seeds, fruits, leaves, roots, bark and nectar are all Red Fire Ant prey.
* They can clear an area of invertebrates, lizards, ground-dwelling birds and other species of ants.

**Solutions:**

* They have traditionally used pesticides in the 1970s. However, this method has affected the other ant species and small birds instead.
* Scientists and Researchers infect phorid flies with *Kneallhazia solenopsae*, a spore-producing insect pathogen. The flies then transmit the disease into the Fire Ants when the flies lay their eggs into the Fire Ants’ head and thorax. This method has successfully reduced the Fire Ants colonies from 53% to 100%.
* Researchers have also experimented with temperature to exterminate the ants such as injecting liquid nitrogen into the nest or pouring hot water into the nest has been effective in exterminating the ants.

**Conclusion:**

They should do whatever that is not harmful to the other species and the environment to get rid of these Fire Ants very soon before they make a lot more damage than they could handle. This is because these Fire Ants are not so beneficial to the areas that are affected since the ants are damaging and eating anything that in its path or way. The ants are rather being burdens to the humans, animals and plants.