

## Invasive Species

### Fire Ants

*Solenopsis xyloni*

#### Where It Came From

Fire ants were accidentally brought to the U.S. from South America in the early 1900s.

#### Where It Invaded

They started in Alabama and have spread so far to 14 states.

#### Its Effect

Black fire ants look like regular ants but are much meaner. They attack any animal or person that comes near them and can also wreck crops. Fire ants attack by biting down on their victim and stinging them over and over. Every time they sting, they shoot a poison into the wound that burns and blisters. It can cause an allergic reaction in some people that can be fatal. Fire ant attacks are especially dangerous for small children and pets. Fire ants are hard to control because they spread by flight. Winged ants fly to a new place, mate and the female becomes a new queen for a new nest. A new nest can grow to hold 300,000 ants!

#### Solutions

Fire ant nests can only be destroyed by killing the queen. This is not an easy thing to do, because when a nest is bothered, the worker ants will carry the queen to a new place to start a new colony. The only thing that has worked is to leave food for workers to take to the queen that has been treated with insecticide. Once the queen is dead, the colony can be poisoned safely.

### Southern Fire Ants

*Solenopsis xyloni*

