

# Red Imported Fire Ants

## QUICK STATS:



**Color:**

Dark reddish-brown



**Shape:**

Segmented; oval



**Size:**

$\frac{1}{16}$  –  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long



**Region:**

Found in the Southeastern U.S., from Virginia to Texas, as well as California and New Mexico



# Red Imported Fire Ants



*Solenopsis invicta*

## OVERVIEW:

Red imported fire ants (RIFA, for short) get their common name from their ability to inflict painful bites and stings. Originally from Brazil, RIFAs were introduced to the U.S. in 1933 and are now found throughout the southern part of the country.

## HABITS:

Red imported fire ants usually nest in soil near structural foundations or in landscaping. They build large mound nests that are flattened and irregular in shape, and between two and four square feet in size. Although these ants usually nest outdoors, they can gain access to buildings through HVAC systems and AC units, and will nest in areas of exposed soil within buildings, such as bath traps. RIFAs are commonly introduced into new areas through potted plants, shrubs and trees.

## THREATS:

Fire ants will sting humans who disturb a nest. The sting of a RIFA is painful and often results in a raised welt that becomes a white pustule. Often, a person stung by a RIFA receives multiple painful stings from more than one of the ants. Those with allergies to insect stings will react more severely.

## PREVENTION:

- Red imported fire ants and their telltale mound nests should be carefully avoided.
- To prevent entry into a structure, seal all internal and external cracks and crevices.
- If you are stung by fire ants, seek medical attention promptly.
- If you suspect you have a red imported fire ant nest on your property, contact a licensed pest professional. Do not attempt to remove the nest on your own.

## DID YOU KNOW? Red imported fire ants...

- have a unique way of dealing with floods. A displaced colony will form a ball and raft flood rivers until it encounters dry land.
- could send as many as one to two percent of the U.S. population into anaphylactic shock with their stings.
- are attracted to electrical junction boxes of traffic signals, air conditioners, etc. They have been known to infest the boxes en masse, causing the equipment to malfunction.

For more information, visit [PESTWORLD.org](http://PESTWORLD.org)

