

Recommended Homeowner Control Products for Little Fire Ant in Hawaii

Based on information provided by the Hawaii Ant Lab (HAL) and the UH Manoa College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR)

Surveying

Survey your property before you begin treating to confirm presence of ants and determine where the most infected spots are. Continue surveying your property for LFA throughout the year to monitor infestations. Once you are at “zero detections,” continue to survey 4x a year to make sure that LFA do not become reestablished and apply barriers as needed.

HOW TO SURVEY:

1. Smear a small amount of creamy peanut butter on a chopstick. Place in shady areas, including crooks of trees, rock walls, potted plants, and debris piles. Leave for 30 min-1 hour.
2. Place sticks with ants in a Ziploc bag and store it in the freezer overnight (to kill ants).
3. If you are unsure if you have LFA, ant samples can be taken or mailed to the BIISC office or Hawaii Ant Lab (Hilo or Kona) for identification.

Treatments:

Insect Growth Regulators (IGR)

IGRs serve as a kind of “birth control” for the ants. When fed to the queen, an IGR will reduce egg production and prevent eggs and larvae from developing, thus weakening the colony. IGRs are not poison and will not kill adult workers (the ones that sting) – because you want them to take it back and feed it to the queen and larvae! Workers have a lifespan of about 3-4 months, and you will begin to see population decline after that point. Don't be discouraged when you still see ants even for a while after treating. This is an effective long-term treatment – keep going!

****Active ingredient in IGRs:** S-methoprene (Tango)

Toxicants

Use of a toxicant-laced bait will result in a quick reduction in workers, but it is unlikely to destroy the colony with only a single treatment. It is vital to retreat multiple times with the toxicant bait to fully eliminate the colony. Toxicants can come in a powder form which can be mixed with the protein gel bait (good for heavy vegetation) or in granule form that is ready-to-use (good for lots of lawn area). Granular baits have a shelf life of 2-3 months once container is opened.

****Active ingredients to look for in toxicants:** hydramethylnon (ex: Amdro, ProBait, Maxforce Complete, Extinguish Plus), indoxacarb (ex: ProVaunt), or metaflumizone (ex: Siesta)

Barrier Treatments

Barrier treatments can be used when you have infestations occurring on neighboring properties where control is not taking place. If you have LFA on your property but not in your house, you may also want to spray around the base of your house and all entryways to prevent ants from “moving in” while you are implementing control outside. If you are baiting, wait a few days before applying a barrier. The barrier may prevent the workers from reaching the bait or keep them from returning to the colony. Barriers come in the form of a spray or a granular. Many granular ant toxicants and granular barrier treatments look the same. To distinguish them, remember that barrier treatments will usually include instructions on wetting the granules, while toxicants need to remain dry.

****Active ingredient in IGRs:** bifenthrin (ex: Talstar, Upstar, Ortho Home Defense) or cyfluthrin (ex: Tempo)



Updated Aug 2019. Research into effective treatments for LFA is ongoing. Information provided may be updated as new research and products are available. Visit BIISC (www.biisc.org) or the Hawaii Ant Lab (www.Littlefireants.com) for the latest info.

Homeowner's Guide to Controlling Little Fire Ants (LFA)

There are many products which claim to be for “fire ants”. However, there are many different species of fire ants in the world, and not all products will work on all species! Little fire ants (*Wasmannia auropunctata*) do not build mounds, and live in super colonies with many queens and nests all working together, which can span large areas from tree tops to rock walls. Their unique ecology requires a special approach to treatment in Hawaii. BIISC relies on the results of years of scientific tests from UH researchers at the Hawaii Ant Lab and UH Cooperative Extension service to inform our recommendations for treatment of LFA on the Big Island.

There are multiple products which have been shown to be effective in treating for LFA. However, the most important thing to keep in mind is that there is no “one-step” method to eradicating an LFA infestation. Colonies can recover after a single application, so any effective plan will involve multiple applications, timed for best impact. Do **NOT** bait if it is raining or may soon rain, or if the ground is soaking. You must treat every 4-6 weeks, so we recommend planning for a treatment at 5 weeks (leaving an extra potential week for “rain rescheduling” if necessary). Adjust calendar if treatment is delayed past 6 weeks.

Whatever bait product you choose, plan to treat your property once every 4-6 weeks for a year in order to wipe out all of the nests!

The calendar below is best for most general situations in Hawaii, but is not the only effective approach! If you have no fruit trees in your yard, you do have the option to go straight to toxicant baits (no IGR). Some products can only be used a limited number of times per year, so make sure to read the label thoroughly and change products when appropriate. When using toxicants, remember that they are more restricted than the IGR (Tango). Only certain toxicants can be applied to food crops. Again, always read the label before using any pesticide product.

Recommended Treatment Schedule for IGR-then-Toxicant Approach

MONTH 1				MONTH 2				MONTH 3			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
SURVEY					IGR					IGR	
IGR											
MONTH 4				MONTH 5				MONTH 6			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
			IGR					IGR			
MONTH 7				MONTH 8				MONTH 9			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
	SURVEY					TOXICANT					SURVEY
	TOXICANT										TOXICANT
MONTH 10				MONTH 11				MONTH 12			
Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
				TOXICANT					SURVEY		
									TOXICANT		

This document is provided as a general guide and is NOT intended as a substitute for information provided on product labels. Pesticides usage is regulated by federal and state authorities and should be used only as directed by the manufacturer. Before using any of the products listed here, be sure that you read and understand directions for use. Take all recommended precautions and wear proper clothing as indicated on each product label.