

**Fire Ant Quarantine and Hay Transport**  
**Summarized by David Buntin, Univ. of Georgia**  
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The red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) was accidentally introduced around Mobile, Alabama in the early 1930's. The ant has spread throughout the southern United States and is also present in southern California. The fire ant is regulated by a federal quarantine regulating movement of certain agricultural materials outside of a quarantine area. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) and various state agencies (such as the Georgia Department of Agriculture) have authority to enforce the quarantine. The map below shows the quarantine area as of October 2009. Recently, concerns about the spread of the imported fire ant have prompted the USDA-APHIS to be more restrictive on the transport of hay and crop straw out of quarantine areas. The following information items some recent conversations with state and federal officials on this subject.

Quarantine Rules

- Only hay and crop straw are regulated. Pine straw if not specifically listed in the quarantine regulations. Other products are also regulated including turf and ornamental nursery potted plant. Full details are here:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/fireants/index.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/index.shtml).

- Hay and crop straw can be shipped anywhere within the quarantine area (see map) without a permit, which includes all of the states of Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida and parts of surrounding state (for current map of the quarantined area, visit:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant\\_health/plant\\_pest\\_info/fireants/downloads/fireant.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/downloads/fireant.pdf)).

- For shipping outside the area, a shipping permit or stamp may be required by the state outside the quarantine area. In Georgia, for a one-time shipment, a farmer can call the Georgia Dept of Agriculture (Division of Plant Industry - Plant Protection). An inspector will inspect their operation and issue a fire ant stamp for shipment. For farmers or brokers that want to ship out of quarantine area routinely, they can meet with the Dept of Agriculture and arrange for a long-term compliance agreement for multiple shipments.

Best Management Practices

- Hay should be picked up and stored as soon as possible after baling. Hay can remain in the field after baling for a short period of time before it is picked up and moved into a storage barn. The term 'short time' is not defined in the regulations but a one or two days is acceptable, but the bales should not lay out much longer due to the risk of infestation.
- If stacked bales are stored under enclosure such as an open pole barn, the bottom layer of hay must remain in the quarantined area, everything else may move.

- There currently are no insecticide treatments for directly treating stored hay to remove fire ants in hay and straw. However treatment of the area around the storage site with an insecticide registered for fire ant control, such as insecticide bait products, is acceptable to reduce the risk of infestation. Products must be applied according to label directions and should not be applied directly to the stored hay or straw.

