

## *Vector of the Month*

### **Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA)**

Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA), *Solenopsis invicta*, are very aggressive, invasive ants. They are called “imported” because they are not native to this country. It is believed that they came to the United States from South America aboard cargo ships that docked in Mobile, Alabama, during the 1930s. RIFA vigorously defend their nests, attack in large numbers, and sting repeatedly. They also attack agricultural workers, compete with beneficial insects, and devour important crops.

Red imported fire ants attack by biting their victims with powerful jaws while stinging repeatedly, injecting venom that causes pustules and itching for up to two weeks. RIFA stings are serious and can be fatal for the very young, the elderly, and anyone allergic to the venom. RIFA are attracted to pet food left outdoors and will sting pets when disturbed. These attacks can be serious for pets since the first part of the animal to get stung is usually the sensitive muzzle. If there are enough stings in the right place, the swelling caused by the venom can obstruct breathing. The toll taken on wildlife can also be considerable. The numbers and variety of reptiles and amphibians remaining in areas infested by RIFA is a fraction of what was there before. Any ground or low nesting birds will be impacted as well. The need for moisture will limit land infestation of RIFA to wetlands. One half of threatened animal species are somewhat dependent on wetlands.

In southern California, RIFA colonies rarely build the large mounds typical of RIFA in other parts of the country. Almost all mounds in Orange County are found in irrigated areas, most often on turf which gets



mowed every week. Look for patches of fine granular soil where it doesn't belong, for example, in the middle of a lawn. It is possible that if a colony has settled into an irrigated planter or other landscaped area, a mound will develop, usually at the base of a shrub. Another common location is adjacent to a hardscape feature like a large rock or a concrete walkway. These large, dense objects are attractive to RIFA because they store heat during the day and release it slowly during the night. The constant temperature provided by the release heat allows colonies to reproduce and gather food twenty-four hours a day.

Since RIFA represent such a serious threat, homeowners may be tempted to treat on their own. Unlike other vector issues, the Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District (OCMVCD) discourages the public from trying to control RIFA on their property. RIFA are considered an exotic pest, and as such, must be tracked; every known site should be reported. The procedure for killing ant colonies is far different from killing individual ants. OCMVCD Inspectors typically use an insect growth regulator (IGR), a product that stops ant larvae from maturing into adults. This results in a decrease in replacement ants and as the workers die off, so does the colony. If you find a RIFA colony, please contact OCMVCD to report it so appropriate control measures can be implemented.

## Red Imported Fire Ant

UC Riverside Center for Invasive Species Research  
Text provided by: Les Greenberg and John Klotz Updated: 2022

### The Red Imported Fire Ant, *Solenopsis invicta*



Photos provided by: Alex Wild, [www.alexanderwild.com](http://www.alexanderwild.com) and Les Greenberg

**The Situation:** The Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA, for short) is a major economic pest in the southeastern United States. It originates in lowland areas of South America, primarily Brazil and Argentina. Since its first documented interception in 1984 at a border station in California, periodic outbreaks have occurred in several counties. In the past, these outbreaks were limited to private properties amenable to rapid eradication efforts. A state-wide eradication effort began in 1999 and ended in 2003. Some localized eradication efforts are still continuing by Vector Control Districts (in the Coachella Valley and Orange County) and Agricultural Commissioner's offices (Los Angeles and San Diego counties) which have continued treatments aimed at controlling the ants. Eradication efforts by the California Department of Food and Agriculture also continue in the Central Valley.



**Damage:** These ants pose an immediate threat to the California's economy because they require a quarantine of nursery products because ants maybe accidentally shipped in potting soil to new areas. In quarantined areas, potted plants cannot be shipped without labor-intensive and expensive drenching of all plants with pesticides. The stinging behavior of Red Imported Fire Ant can be hazardous to field workers as the sting is noxious and

produces a pustule on the skin that can scar if infected. Newborn livestock and poultry are vulnerable to attack by ants. Foraging ants can clog irrigation lines and short-circuit electrical systems. In natural ecosystems they may interfere with and displace native wildlife, young birds in nests and lizards can be especially vulnerable.

**Economic Impact:** The farm gate values for ornamental production nurseries in Orange, Los Angeles and San Diego counties in 2002 was \$1.3 billion, and ~40% of the crop was produced in these three counties, making it one of the major crops in these areas. The value of California's entire nursery industry in 2002 was estimated at \$2.6 billion. This industry faces the immediate impact of quarantine regulations that require pesticide drenching before shipments can commence. There are immediate expenses involving the application of pesticides to all plants in quarantined areas. In Texas, over \$1.1 billion is spent annually on pesticides for fire ant control, and \$872 million of that is for control of ants infesting lawns in urban areas.



**Distribution:** In 1997 fire ants arrived with honeybees from Texas and infested almond orchards in Kern and Fresno counties. In 1998 Red Imported Fire Ant were detected in an area covering at least 50 square miles of Orange County, leading to a quarantine of the entire county. Other outbreaks have subsequently been discovered in western Riverside County, (especially the Coachella Valley), and the counties of Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Sacramento. Additional infested almond orchards have been found in Madera, Merced, and Stanislaus counties. Some of these infestations may have been present for 10 years before they were officially detected. RIFA have not been found in non-irrigated regions except in proximity to lakes (Lake Elsinore), and in natural wetlands and creeks in southern Orange Co. The most recent

spreads (2008-2009) are into San Bernardino County from Los Angeles County, especially into Chino Hills and Ontario.

**Research:** Cooperative Extension at the University of California, Riverside, is educating homeowners, pest control operators, growers, and other affected parties, about the biology and control of fire ants. Research has involved testing the efficacy of new fire ant insecticides for the California market, studying the ant's flight behavior, and looking at competition with native ant species. We are pursuing the introduction of biocontrol agents for fire ants.

# ORANGE COUNTY MOSQUITO AND VECTOR CONTROL DISTRICT

## MONTHLY REPORT: Yorba Linda

### February



	Monthly	Year to Date (YTD)	County Monthly	County YTD
<b>OPERATIONS</b>				
Service Requests Completed:	2	6	124	280
Mosquitoes:	2	4	93	196
Rats:	0	0	22	55
Rifa:	0	2	9	27
Number of Swimming Pools Treated/Inspected:	66	100	825	2,184
Hours Spent Treating/Inspecting Gutters	0	0	0	0.0
Undergrounds Treated:	0	0	287	287
Acres of Flood Channels Treated:	0	0	7.1552	7.6892
Acres of RIFA Treated/Inspected:	99	212	1,740	4,686
Number of Inspection Treatments:	29	96	1,359	2,697
<b>LABORATORY</b>				
Adult Mosquitoes Collected:	0	0	322	322
Collected From Trustee Home:	0	0	0	0
Invasive Aedes	0	0	0	0
Mosquito Pools (Samples) Tested:	0	0	20	20
WNV Positive Samples:	0	0	0	0
WNV Positive Birds:	0	0	0	0
Number of Human Infections/Deaths:	0	0	0	0
Fleas, Ticks, and Others Tested:	-	-	-	206
<b>COMMUNICATIONS</b>				
Outreach Events Attended:	0	0	0	0
General Presentations:	0	0	3	3
Educational Program Presentations:	0	0	20	33
Calls Received	-	-	122	258

#### PROJECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH OCMVCD

None at this time

#### COUNTY RESPONSE LEVEL / AVERAGE RATING:

Normal Season (1.0 to 2.5)  
Elevated Risk (2.6 to 4.0)  
High Risk (4.1 to 5.0)

TOTAL	6
AVERAGE	1.50





# MONTHLY UPDATE

## April 2022

The April 13 Commission meeting will be held at the regular meeting location in the County Hall of Administration, Planning Commission Hearing Room.

### *Here are upcoming items for the April 13 Regular Meeting:*

#### **Third Quarter Financial Report**

The Commission's budget and investment portfolio continue to remain within approved budget levels, and current projections reflect expenditures at approximately 70%, as we head into the final fiscal quarter. The April agenda will include the financial reporting of January 1 through March 31, 2022, and we will round out the financial updates for this fiscal cycle with the year-end report in July 2022.

#### **Professional Services Agreement with Rosenow Spevacek Group (RSG, Inc.)**

The Commission will consider a professional services agreement with RSG to prepare the MSRs for the Southwest and West MSR Regions. After a competitive proposal process, RSG is being recommended by staff based on the firm's extensive experience in conducting MSRs and competitive pricing.

#### **Amendment to the Commission's Accounting Agreement**

Eide Bailly has provided independent accounting services to OC LAFCO since 2016. An amendment to the current agreement is being proposed to affect the firm's current billable rates and minor changes to the scope of services provided by the firm. Proposed changes to the billable rates have been incorporated into the FY 2022-23 budget and, if approved by the Commission, the amended billable rates would be effective July 1, 2022.

#### **Busy Times in the Capitol**

As activity in the California Legislature continues to gain momentum, the Commission will receive a report on newly proposed legislation of LAFCO interest. New bills that have surfaced since the last legislative report include: 1) the annual validating acts, which protects the Commission against errors that might invalidate their actions, 2) the 2022 Omnibus Bill, which includes non-substantive changes to the CKH Act to bring clarity and improvements to LAFCO law, and 3) several bills involving public meeting proceedings. At the April meeting, the Commission will also receive an update on the recent amendments and status of SB 938, introduced by Senator Hertzberg and reviewed and supported by the Commission at the March meeting.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Public Member and Special District Members Appointment Processes Underway**

During the month of March, staff kicked off the appointment processes for the upcoming expiring terms for the regular public member and two special district member seats. As the appointing authority of the public member, the Commission will conduct interviews of the candidate finalists, recommended by the Ad hoc Committee, during the May 11 Regular Commission meeting. The special district appointment process will conclude in early June. Please refer any public inquiries regarding these processes to OC LAFCO staff.

#### **Annual Filing of Form 700**

A reminder that the Form 700 for the reporting period of January 1 through December 31, 2021, is due on or before **April 1, 2022**.

# ORANGE COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICT

## BOARD MEMBER TALKING POINTS

March 2022

### **Extended Staffing Services for Infrastructure Improvements**

OC San anticipates Capital Improvement Program (CIP) expenditures of approximately \$1.5 billion from July 2022 through June 2027, with annual expenditures doubling between 2021 and 2023. As such, the program will require a temporary increase in the number of engineering and project support professionals over the next five years. OC San is proposing contracted supplemental support staff to meet the need to achieve the CIP goals which will be presented at next month's committee meeting.

### **Virtual Meetings Continue**

OC San's Board of Directors approved a resolution to continue with virtual public meetings for the next 30 days. Members of the public can join via Microsoft Teams with instructions published on the agenda and submit their public comments verbally or electronically. A new resolution will come before the Board for reconsideration next month to determine if an extension is warranted.

### **OC San Sewer Construction Project Updates**

*Los Alamitos/Seal Beach/Rossmoor specific* – Daytime construction is scheduled to start on March 28 on the [Los Alamitos Trunk Sewer Project](#). The one-week activity will take place on northbound Los Alamitos Blvd. and Bradbury Rd. for manhole repairs. Nighttime work is ongoing on southbound Los Alamitos Blvd. to conduct line cleaning and chemical grouting. The entire project is expected to be completed by late 2022.

*Anaheim/Buena Park specific* – Pipeline cleaning and grouting is ongoing on the [Orange-Western Trunk Sewer Project](#) on Western Avenue in the cities of Buena Park and Anaheim. This activity is occurring at night when sewer flows are low. Once this activity is complete, manhole repair work will commence. Construction is scheduled for completion late 2022.

*Westminster specific* - Construction on the [Westminster Blvd. Sewer Project](#) is expected to once again ramp up in preparation for the upcoming dry weather season. As previously mentioned, the existing 42-inch south force main was not allowed to be taken offline during the wet weather season to ensure enough capacity within the force main system to mitigate risks of a sewer spill. When the restriction is lifted, the force main will be taken offline and drained for the contractor to begin construction to replace the force main using a method called sliplining. A notification was distributed to 4,500 residents about the upcoming construction activity.

*Fountain Valley specific* - Pile drilling for foundation work for the new [Headquarters](#) building is complete with a total of 168 piles installed. The contractor is also working at Plant No. 1 for underground utilities. Staff and the consultant are working on the furniture, fixtures, and equipment procurement.

Any project related question can be directed to the OC San Construction Hotline at 714.378.2965 or via email at [ConstructionHotline@ocsan.gov](mailto:ConstructionHotline@ocsan.gov).

