

7. POLICY POSITION

THE CONTROL OF IMPORTED FIRE ANTS

BACKGROUND

In 1918, imported fire ants (*Solenopsis Invicta*) were accidentally transported to the United States from South America and have become a serious agricultural pest and human health hazard. Imported fire ants have now spread to 11 states and one territory, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Puerto Rico.

Imported fire ants attack and sometimes kill newborn pigs, calves, sheep and birds, as well as pets and wildlife. Imported fire ants also destroy seedling corn and soybeans, feed on buds or fruits of many plants and may girdle young trees. The hard conical nest of imported fire ants can mount as high as two to three feet, making it difficult or impossible to cultivate or harvest infested fields. Imported fire ants are an unsightly hazard in yards, parks and other recreational areas where they are especially dangerous to children and pets.

RECOMMENDATION

To combat the growth of this hazardous pest, it is imperative that the U. S. Congress adopt and fund a program which would assist state and local authorities in finding the best control method. The Southern Legislative Conference strongly supports a cohesive approach to research efforts among the states and the appropriate federal agencies, as well as increased funding for research, to identify effective measures to eradicate the imported fire ant.

The Southern Legislative Conference urges the Congress to adopt measures to increase research on the eradication of the imported fire ant. Additionally, the Southern Legislative Conference requests that the Congress require a cooperative and coordinated national program effort between the states and appropriate federal agencies in order to find an effective means for the elimination of the imported fire ant.

Adopted by the Southern Legislative Conference, July 19, 1994, Norfolk, Virginia.