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Officials Remind Farmers and Ranchers about Imported Fire Ant Quarantine as Demand for Baled Hay Increases in Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma

Little Rock, Ark. – Recent wildfires in Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma have consumed large areas of livestock forage, resulting in an increased demand for baled hay in those areas. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) wants to ensure that, in meeting this demand, any baled hay moving out of an Imported Fire Ant (IFA) quarantine area (which includes most of Arkansas) meets the quarantine requirements to avoid the establishment of IFA in additional areas.

Most of the southeastern United States is currently under quarantine, including the majority of counties in Arkansas, Texas, and southern Oklahoma. Find an IFA quarantine map, here:
https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/downloads/fireant.pdf

Agriculture is at risk from IFA for several reasons. These ants will feed on the buds and fruits of numerous crop plants, especially corn, soybeans, okra, and citrus. They can also girdle young trees. Large nests located in fields interfere with and damage equipment during cultivation and harvesting. IFA respond rapidly and aggressively to disturbances, and ant attacks inhibit field-worker activities. A single fire ant can sting its target repeatedly. Young and newborn animals are especially susceptible to the venom of these stings.

The Arkansas State Plant Board (ASPB) recommends that properly stored hay and straw be certified under a compliance agreement or inspection, so that the receiving state knows that the hay is free of fire ants. Arkansas farmers and ranchers should contact Paul Shell at 501-225-1598 to arrange for inspections.

Any hay that contains soil OR does not pass inspection may not leave a quarantine area. Baled hay that meets any of the requirements below is not regulated and has no movement restrictions. Learn more, here: <http://www.aad.arkansas.gov/Websites/aad/files/Content/5977294/Baled-Hay.pdf>

- For baled hay that is stacked, all bales except the bottom layer in direct contact with the ground.
- Hay that is cut, baled, loaded, and shipped without storage.
- Baled hay that is stored on an impervious surface such as hard pan (highly compressed soil), asphalt, concrete, etc.
- Baled hay that is stored elevated above the soil on pallets or tires or stored on landscaping cloth placed over the soil.

The mission of the ASPB is to protect and serve the citizens of Arkansas and the agricultural and business communities by providing information and unbiased enforcement of laws and regulations thus ensuring quality products and services. Learn more about the ASPB at: www.plantboard.arkansas.gov, or call 501-225-1598.

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