

Fire Ant Quarantines Still In Effect During Hay Emergency

Fire Ant Quarantined Must Still Be Heeded When Moving Hay To Drought Areas.

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Red imported fire ant quarantines must still be heeded as out-of-state suppliers try to help out Arkansas livestock owners short on hay, said John Jennings, professor-forage, for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

“Many producers from across the southeastern U.S. are offering hay for sale to help their colleagues in Arkansas,” he said. “However, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and most of Texas are in fire ant quarantined areas, which means hay suppliers have to use care to comply with USDA quarantines.”

Last week, Gov. Mike Beebe issued a proclamation easing certain highway restrictions for 30 days for hay movement. The proclamation did not lift transportation restrictions linked to fire ant quarantines, which are in place to keep the ants from spreading, the Arkansas State Plant Board said. Red imported fire ants currently infest Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Puerto Rico.

Much of Arkansas is included in the fire ant quarantine and Kelly Loftin, extension entomologist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said, “hay from quarantined areas inside and outside of Arkansas may be shipped without restriction to other quarantined areas within Arkansas.

“The issue is with shipment from quarantined

areas to non-quarantined areas,” he said. “In that case, the hay must be certified to be fire ant free and have been stored properly – not in contact with the ground – for it to be allowed to its destination.”

Certification may take the form of a USDA compliance agreement with a USDA seal or a limited permit signed by either a USDA or appropriate state regulatory official from the state of origin, Loftin said. Arkansas producers should maintain a copy of the fire ant quarantine certificate for their records and a copy needs to accompany the shipment.

“Certification is very critical because even if the hay has been stored properly but has not been certified it could be turned back,” Jennings said. “Arkansas had hay turned back from Tennessee a few years back because it had not been certified.”

The most recent fire ant quarantine map can be found at: www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/downloads/fireant.pdf.

To find fire ant quarantine areas by zip code: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/zipcode.shtml

A USDA brochure about the potential to move fire ants in hay bales can be found:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant_health/plant_pest_info/fireants/downloads/BaledHayProducers.pdf

For questions about hay and restrictions, contact Paul Shell or Terry Walker with the Arkansas State Plant board at 501-225-1598. Δ



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