

# Rules and Regulations

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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

#### 7 CFR Part 301

[Docket No. 02–115–2]

#### Imported Fire Ant; Approved Treatments

**AGENCY:** Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Final rule.

**SUMMARY:** We are amending the imported fire ant regulations by adding the insecticide methoprene (Extinguish®) to the list of chemicals that are authorized for the treatment of regulated articles. This product is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for use against the imported fire ant and has been found efficacious based on testing by the Gulfport Plant Methods Center. This rule makes methoprene available for the treatment of containerized plants and field-grown woody ornamentals in the quarantined areas.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** November 14, 2003.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Charles L. Brown, Imported Fire Ant Program Manager, Invasive Species and Pest Management, PPQ, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 134, Riverdale, MD 20737–1231; (301) 734–8247.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

The imported fire ant, *Solenopsis invicta* Buren and *Solenopsis richteri* Forel, is an aggressive, stinging insect that, in large numbers, can seriously injure or even kill livestock, pets, and humans. The imported fire ant feeds on crops and builds large, hard mounds that damage farm and field machinery. Imported fire ants are notorious hitchhikers and are readily transported

long distances when articles such as soil and nursery stock are shipped outside the infested area.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to prevent further imported fire ant spread by enforcing a Federal quarantine and cooperating with imported fire ant-infested States to mitigate the risks associated with the movement of regulated articles such as nursery stock and used soil-moving equipment. Also, APHIS evaluates the efficacy of regulatory treatments for preventing the artificial spread of imported fire ant and revises its regulations and procedures as necessary. APHIS works with States, industry, and other Federal agencies to develop and test promising new insecticides and biological control agents.

The regulations in “Subpart—Imported Fire Ant” (7 CFR 301.81 through 301.81–10, referred to below as the regulations) quarantine infested States or infested areas within States and impose restrictions on the interstate movement of certain regulated articles from those quarantined States or areas for the purpose of preventing the artificial spread of the imported fire ant.

Sections 301.81–4 and 301.81–5 of the regulations provide, among other things, that regulated articles requiring treatment prior to interstate movement must be treated in accordance with the methods and procedures prescribed in the appendix to the subpart, which sets forth the treatment provisions of the “Imported Fire Ant Program Manual.”

On March 21, 2003, we published in the **Federal Register** (68 FR 13859–13861, Docket No. 02–115–1) a proposal to amend the regulations by adding the insecticide methoprene (Extinguish®) to the list of chemicals that are authorized for the treatment of regulated articles and make methoprene available for the treatment of containerized plants and field-grown woody ornamentals in the quarantined areas.

We solicited comments concerning our proposal for 60 days ending May 20, 2003. We received two comments by that date. The comments were from State departments of agriculture. Both commenters were in favor of adding methoprene (Extinguish®) to the list of chemicals that are authorized for the treatment of regulated articles.

Therefore, for the reasons given in the proposed rule, we are adopting the

proposed rule as a final rule, without change.

#### Executive Order 12866 and Regulatory Flexibility Act

This rule has been reviewed under Executive Order 12866. For this action, the Office of Management and Budget has waived its review under Executive Order 12866.

This final rule amends the appendix to the imported fire ant regulations to allow the use of the insecticide methoprene (Extinguish®) against the imported fire ant. Methoprene is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for use against the imported fire ant in containerized plants and field-grown woody ornamentals and has been found to be efficacious against imported fire ant based on testing by the Gulfport Plant Methods Center in Mississippi.

Determining the cost to treat for imported fire ant in nursery operations is complicated because of the large number of insecticide products, varying soil conditions, and various types of nursery crops. For example, in two surveys conducted by Hall and Holloway (1994 and 1995) of 37 nursery crop growers in Texas, which represented more than half of all nursery crops produced in that State, chemical cost per treatment per acre for imported fire ant control averaged \$12.10, with treatment costs representing up to 4 percent of their production cost. Almost half (47 percent) of those growers reported treating for imported fire ant and most of them reported using more than one pesticide in their operations (range=1 to 3; average=1.5), making the average cost per acre for insecticides to control imported fire ant \$18.15 (*i.e.*, 1.5 × \$12.10).

Methoprene (Extinguish®) is the latest insecticide to be added to the regulations for the treatment of imported fire ant. The currently approved treatments—Fipronil (Chipco®), Pyriproxyfen (Distance®), Fenoxycarb (AWARD®), Hydramethylnon (AMDRO®), and Bifenthrin (Talstar®)—cost approximately the same in the bulk market, \$5 to \$12 per pound, with each pound treating 17 colonies (*i.e.*, mounds) of imported fire ant. However, any insecticide’s retail price depends on the price charged by its local distributor and may vary from State to State.