

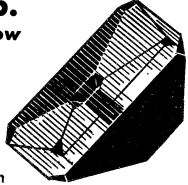
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ENTOMOLOGY

Tiny Parasitic Ant May Curb Dread Fire Ant

➤ A TINY SOUTH AMERICAN ant may control the dreaded fire ant, which is causing serious problems to people, crops, livestock and wildlife in the southern United States.

This tricky little ant, *Labachena daguerrei*, does not exist in the U.S., but is being carefully observed in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil.

Living in the mounds of the fire ants, *Solenopsis saevissima*, the *Labachena* ants actually trick their hosts into feeding and caring for their young, while the fire ant young suffer from lack of food, space and care, report Uruguayan scientists of the Faculty of Agronomy, University of the Republic of Montevideo. Laboratory and field studies have been carried on for the last three years under a grant from Agricultural Research Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

However, the parasite will not be imported across the border until it is certain that it will not damage anything else and that it can survive in the southern U.S.

The parasite feeds on nothing but the regurgitations of the fire ant. It clutches onto the fire ant queen's neck and holds her in one place to benefit from the care and attention of the fire ant attendants.

When a fire ant starts to feed its queen, the parasite rapidly flutters its antennae, and the worker feeds the parasite instead of the queen by regurgitating food into its mouth.

When the fire ant queen lays eggs, the female parasites also lay eggs. The fire ant

workers package them together in saliva and store them near the queen or a source of water. By giving the same careful attention to the parasite young, the fire ant workers thus decrease the attention and care to their own young.

Scientists have found that the parasites greatly decrease the vigor of the fire ant colony and keep their numbers under control, whereas fire ant colonies free from parasites contain large numbers of larvae.

The new parasite may be introduced into specific U.S. locations heavily infested by the fire ants, said officials of the plant pest control divisions of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

• Science News Letter, 87:318 May 15, 1965

ENTOMOLOGY

Feeding Stimulant Found For Female Houseflies

➤ SCIENTISTS have isolated certain chemicals that stimulate female houseflies into eating vigorously.

When less than one-millionth of an ounce of the chemical is placed on a small piece of filter paper, hundreds of female flies cluster around and feed greedily.

By finding methods to influence the behavior of insects, scientists can come closer to understanding how to control them.

The newly extracted material, so tasty to houseflies, is guanosine monophosphate or leucine, extracted from yeast hydrolysate or casein hydrolysate, reported insect physiologists W. E. Robbins, R. E. Yamamoto and T. J. Shortino and chemist M. J. Thompson. The scientists have been conducting research at the insect physiology pioneering research laboratory of the Agriculture Research Service, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The extract seems to be appealing only to female flies, not to males, the scientists found. They believe it is probably correlated with the ovarian development cycle of the female.

Apparently none of these feeding stimulants attract flies. When the substance is placed in a cage of houseflies, random movement brings some of them in contact, and then they begin feeding. This feeding attracts other flies, and within a few minutes many females are clustered and feeding on the material.

• Science News Letter, 87:318 May 15, 1965

AGRICULTURE

Devices for Shredding Orchard Wastes Studied

➤ IN AN EFFORT to remove what little contribution agriculture makes to America's polluted air, researchers are studying mechanical devices to chip and shred orchard trimmings and grain stubble and turn them back into the soil.

This would replace the ancient method of burning crop residues, which farmers have used to control plant diseases and insect pests, pointed out Victor P. Osterli, Agricultural Extension Service of the University of California at Davis.

• Science News Letter, 87:318 May 15, 1965

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