



# Recognition of Fire Ants in Lubbock

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Fire ants on the High Plains do not build the tall mounds common in more southerly parts of Texas. Mounds here tend to be very short, on the order of ground level to one or two inches high.

Additionally, our cold and rather arid climate prevents fire ants from building mounds out in the middle of grassy areas, except when the grass is very well watered. We generally find that fire ant mounds are located adjacent to sidewalks or other barriers that capture heat and promote runoff of rain or sprinkler water.

A typical fire ant mound on the High Plains is covered by "coffee ground" looking soil. However, several species of ants create these "coffee grounds", and so their presence does not necessarily mean fire ants.

Perhaps the best way to tell if ants are fire ants is to disturb the mound. On a warm day, if the ants come boiling out of the mound in large numbers and seem to be very irritated, they are probably fire ants. The other ant species here that have mounds that look similar to those of fire ants do not react nearly as aggressively when disturbed. This behavior is illustrated in one of the

Fire ants, like all insects, move more slowly when the temperature is cold. Their defensive response will be slower on a cool day, especially when the soil is cool as well.