

## **Controlling Fire Ants in the Amazon**

In early 1993, millions of fire ants began attacking the more than 10,000 residents of Envira, Brazil, a small municipality in the Amazon basin only reachable by boat or aircraft. Especially worrisome were the attacks on children. Although no one died, many children were hospitalized as a result of ant stings.

Several control methods were tried by the Brazilians, but none was successful. After continued failed attempts finally, the U.S. Embassy was contacted, which requested the Assistance of Dr. Williams, a Research Entomologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service and an international authority on the control of fire ants.

A group of three scientists was put together. They were contacting several companies in the United States producing fire ant baits. Because the residents were so poor, they were requesting a donation of fire ant bait for the people of Envira. Ciba Greensboro quickly responded by donating 2,000 lbs of their bait, Logic (fenoxycarb), an insect growth regulator used for fire ant control in the United States.

After the necessary preparations, in September 1993 the three scientists raveled with the equipment and product to Envira. There, observations were made on the location of fire ant nests and 20-25 extremely large fire ant mounds were immediately located near the center of the town. These were some of the largest mounds ever seen by the scientists with each mound easily containing over 1 million ants. Then the scientific team described safety precautions to use when applying Logic etc. and trained the officials of Envira and the Brazilian scientists who accompanied the U.S. scientists on locating fire ant colonies, bait application and basic information on the biology of fire ants. The scientific team recommended three treatments, one to be conducted immediately, another approximately 6 months later during the wet season in between rains when ant populations were more concentrated, and a third treatment one year after the initial application.

Press coverage of the project was extensive. The story was filmed and aired all over in Brazil and in other South American countries. Also, the articles appeared in several U.S. and local newspapers. In addition, Dr. Williams was interviewed by National Public Radio and National Geographic Television who plans to air a story on fire ants in spring 1995.

The mission was a success and provided an outstanding example of cooperation between industry and the people and governments of Brazil and the U.S. and how cooperative team efforts can make a difference in the lives of people all over the world.

*This is a short version of an article sent by David F. Williams, Research Entomologist, USDA-ARS, Medical and Veterinary Entomology Research Lab., Gainesville, Florida, USA. Full report is available from Theo Häfliger, Communications Agriculture, Fax.+41 61 697 39 66*