



Industry Advice Notice

Title: Treatment for Fire Ants by the Queensland State authority for products that enter the export system	Number: 2015/03
Date issued: 26 October 2015	Date of Expiry: Until Further Notice
Distributed to: Approved Certifying Organisations	Last Notice in the category: 2012/02
Instruction issued under Export Control (Organic Produce Certification) Orders	Contact details: NPGExports@agriculture.gov.au

PURPOSE

1. To advise of requirements where treatment for fire ants by the Queensland state authority is conducted on a property that produces certified organic products for export.

BACKGROUND

2. Fire Ants are a serious pest in Australia. Fire Ants cause extensive damage to Australia's ecological and agricultural systems.
3. In 2001 the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (NRIFAEP) was established to eradicate fire ants from Australia. The NRIFAEP is run by the Queensland State authority (Biosecurity Queensland¹).
4. Treatment is conducted by the State authority and occurs during the warmer months from September to March / April.
5. The two products used by the State authority for treatment of fire ants are Engage Ant Bait (active – pyriproxyfen) and Distance Ant Bait (active – s-methoprene). Both products are distributed in a pelletised form by air, all terrain vehicle and / or foot.
6. Neither of the products is compliant with the National Standard.
7. Products entering the export chain must be certified in compliance with the National Standard with the exception of those made under conformity assessment arrangements.
8. This organic notice replaces the previously issued organic notice 2012/02.

CONSIDERATION

9. State authorities have located infestations of fire ants in locations of Queensland that may impact some organic operators.
10. It is compulsory for the all property owners to allow the State authority to apply treatment for fire ants under the NRIFAEP. This includes organic operators.

¹ www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_4538.htm

11. At this time, both the treatment options used by the State authority are non - compliant with the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce due to the presence of a non - approved chemical substance.
12. Some importing countries may not recognise this pest control substance, therefore where the certified produce enters the export chain, operators must notify their certifying organisation if treatment is occurring on their property. In turn the other approved certifying organisations should be notified of the operator name, number and exclusion period only if there has been a sale of affected produce.

OUTCOME/ACTIONS

13. Where treatment for fire ants has occurred,
 1. The area of land where treatment has occurred must be removed from certification for a period of not less than 12 months from the date of application.
 2. All certified livestock must be removed from the area prior to treatment. Livestock cannot be returned to the area that was treated for a period of not less than 12 months from the date of application. If livestock are not removed, the livestock must be quarantined and the livestock and/or its produce must not be sold as organic.
 3. A certifying organisation may approach department for an amendment to this timeframe, on a case by case basis. An amendment request by a certifying organisation must include documented evidence to support their request for a reduction in time. Department may refer to OISCC during the decision process regarding amendment requests received.
 4. Land and certified produce may be subject to sampling and laboratory analysis at the inspection following treatment.
14. The State authorities have indicated they will work with local farmers to strive for a minimal impact to their production:
 - a) A State authority will provide notification to the certified operator where a property is within a treatment area. The State authority will endeavour to schedule treatment dates to best suit the production cycle on the effected organic property. The State authority applies the chemical treatment for fire ant control;
 - b) Certified operators are required to notify their approved certifying organisation prior to treatment for fire ants.
 - c) Certified operators must have a documented system to manage the treated area and any change to their certification status.
 - d) Application of treatment for fire ants can only be conducted by the State authority.

INSTRUCTION

In relation to the export of certified products, approved certifying organisations must have documented evidence that they have:

15. Informed staff of the requirements of this Notice and its implementation;
16. Advised Queensland primary producer certified operators of this Notice;
17. A documented system in place for monitoring those operators affected by the treatment (including certification status change and time frame).
18. Ensured that this documented system forms part of the certifier's QM system;

19. Kept all records relating to this matter, including a register of affected operators; and have these records available for review by department at time of annual audit.
20. Amended producer checklists, to contain questions regarding the treatment of fire ants to identify
 - if treatment has been applied;
 - if so, the certification status, timeframe and area of land affected;
21. Not issued an organic produce certificate for export of product from the affected area during the exclusion period. This will require documentary evidence that OPC requests from operators are reviewed to confirm that affected operators are not exporting produce from the treated area;
22. Advised all other approved certifying organisations of the operator's details affected by the treatment including treatment date and suspension dates of certification only if there has been a sale of affected produce. This will safeguard the export system where product may be processed by an operator approved by another certifying organisation.