



Pests and Pesticides in Child-serving Facilities: An IPM Newsletter

UT Online School Pest Management Survey Submission Cancelled for 2009 Due to Submission Difficulties

By Karen Vail

Most of you, as the individual in your school district most responsible for pest management decisions, should have received an email invitation to conduct an online pest management survey. The e-mail explained the details of the survey and provided a unique logon identifier. The current system requires entries for each school. We had intended for the school

system pest management decision-maker to forward the passwords to a responsible person in each school, so the system administrator would not be overburdened with completing the surveys. Very few surveys have been completed and some personnel experienced difficulties with

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Tennessee School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Questionnaire

Please check the appropriate answer. If pest management services are contracted, please consult the contractor if you don't know the answers.

I have read and understand the [Informed Consent Statement](#).

1. Which setting best describes your school district?
 Urban Suburban Rural

2. Does your school district have an official policy statement concerning pest management?
 Yes No Don't Know

3. How does your school district perform pest management...

	In-House	Contract	Both	Neither
For buildings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For grounds/athletic fields?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. If pest management is contracted, at which level of administration is pest management contracted?
 School District Individual School

5. Does your school district currently use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in ...
(IPM emphasizes regular inspections, not regular spraying of pesticides, to detect pests. Basic pest survival elements, such as food, water and shelter, are removed and pest access into a building is reduced. Pesticides, if used, target the

the survey submission process. Thus, we have decided to reprogram the survey to remove any glitches, potentially shorten it, and to require submission for the school system. In upcoming years, one survey will be completed for each school system and NOT for each school in the system. Unfortunately, we don't know when we will have access to a programmer, so we have decided to cancel the submissions for 2009. IPM ratings will be assigned to those surveys already completed and results will be posted to the schoolipm.utk.edu web site. In addition, we will request surveys to be completed every other year rather than annually. Thanks for all of your help with past surveys and we appreciate your assistance with school IPM.

Special points of interest:

- > [UT Online Pest Management Survey Submission Cancelled for 2009](#)
- > [Be Careful What You Wish for](#)
- > [Club Soda Did Not Control Fire Ants](#)

....Texas Extension entomologists, Wizzie Brown tested club soda in a replicated study this summer and got no control. "It's impressive though, when you pour it onto a mound," she told me this morning. Lots of fizzing! Unfortunately the fire ants were not overly impressed....

Excerpted from "Club Soda for your ants, sir?"

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Be Careful What You Wish For

By Mike Merchant

The article below was produced Monday, January 4, 2010 for the Texas Agrilife Extension *Insects in the City* Blog by Mike Merchant and has been reprinted with permission. This and other *Insects in the City* bloggings can be found at <http://insectsinthecity.blogspot.com/>

Many of you know that for more than 15 years many committed people in our state have worked very hard to bring meaningful change to the way we conduct pest control programs in Texas public schools. In 1990 the Texas legislature passed a school integrated pest management (IPM) law requiring all schools to practice IPM by allowing pesticides to be applied only by certified applicators, appointing a trained IPM coordinators in each school district to oversee pest control, and set up a system for encouraging the use of less-hazardous pesticides. Since then, the law has succeeded, in my opinion, through diligent attention to careful and wise rule-making (aided by lots of public and professional input), daily enforcement activity by our structural pest control regulatory agency and lots (and lots) of training.

Today Texas has one of the best records in the country at getting schools to change the way they do pest control. The result has been not only reducing reliance on scheduled pesticide applications and encouraging the use of safer pesticides in schools, but also better pest control. All of these things work together to make schools safer, more pleasant places to work and study.

The process of change has been painful at times, and there have been mistakes made along the way, but it has been satisfying watching people pull together in the spirit of wanting to do the right thing for kids and schools. Part of the satisfaction many of us feel about school IPM in Texas is that we made it work, it is our program, and it works for us in our state with all its glorious fire ants, giant waterbugs and other unique pest challenges.

Meanwhile, other states around the country have struggled to bring an IPM approach to public school programs with varying levels of success. Progress has been slow enough that some have called for a national school IPM program. I agree that some form of federal legislation could be useful in encouraging school IPM implementation--after all state legislation has been the driving force for change in Texas. Such legislation, if passed, should require schools to follow IPM principles, establish training and certification criteria for those who conduct pest control and apply pesticides on school facilities, and let the states figure out the rest.

But that's not what [H.R. 4159 the School Environmental Protection Act \(SEPA\) of 2009](#), introduced by U.S. Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ) looks like at all. This bill provides an object lesson in the old warning to be careful what you wish for. The bill is a modified version of bills that have been repeatedly introduced over the past several congresses, and which have never made it out of committee... for good reason. Among other things, the bill bypasses the regulatory label approval process used today by the U.S. EPA. It will essentially eliminate the right of schools to use most (I would guess more than 95% of) registered pesticides that are currently in use. It requires schools to notify parents every time a pesticide is used that is not on the (highly restrictive) list of "least toxic pesticides". It will essentially eliminate the ability of schools to use herbicides on grounds or sports fields. It (inexplicably) prohibits schools from using synthetic fertilizer, forcing them to use only more expensive organic fertilizers. It will establish a federal advisory committee that has the

power to create a list of approved pesticides for all states. And it does all this without authorizing Congress to appropriate money to spend on IPM education or administration of the program, or for states to pay for enforcement of what will be highly unpopular regulations.

In my opinion, the approach taken by this bill will hurt the progress we've made in Texas on school IPM, and will likely set back progress toward IPM implementation in other states as well. In nearly all aspects of its construction, bill H.R. 4159 is more restrictive than Texas's laws and regulations. Supporters of the bill claim that it will not preempt existing state school IPM regulations, but that is only true when federal law is less restrictive than state law. The fact is that no state or school district in the U.S. have school IPM regulations stricter than this bill.

It seems to me that chances for passage of H.R. 4159 are slim, given the cost and burden it will pose on the nation's schools. Nevertheless the persistent return of this legislation year after year suggests that the blanket anti-pesticide advocates (those who oppose nearly any and every pesticide regardless of its usefulness or benefits) are not ready to give up. The shift in the balance of power in Washington, however, means that what has happened over the past several years may not be a faithful guide to what will happen this year. It is important that professionals who understand IPM read this bill and make their opinions known.

By the way, it's never been easier to read and comment on federal legislation. After a simple registration process, you can make comments on this bill at the Open Congress website at <http://www.opencongress.org/bill/111-h4159/text>. Using this site you can register your support or opposition and even write your legislators about any bill with a click of the button.

Club Soda for Your Ants, Sir?

By Mike Merchant

Apparently, Mike Merchant has been on a hot streak as I liked another one of his blogs so much that I just needed to include it in this newsletter too. Here Mike addresses a home fire ant remedy that has been circulating via email. The article below was also produced Monday, January 4, 2010 for the Texas Agrilife Extension *Insects in the City* Blog by Mike Merchant and has been reprinted with permission. This and other *Insects in the City* bloggings can be found at <http://insectsinthecity.blogspot.com/>

One of the constants in the pest control business is the endless stream of supposedly sure-fire cures for this or that pest problem. Placing crushed mint leaves around the house to keep ants out of the home is one that will make your house smell nice, but won't do a lot to discourage ants. Another favorite old-time cure is putting [hedge apples](#) (fruits of the osage orange, *Maclura pomifera*) around the home to discourage cockroaches. Although some recent research suggests that a component in hedge apples may have insect repelling properties (most plants produce secondary plant compound that serve as insecticides or fungicides), it is highly unlikely that any aromatic plant oil could be dispersed throughout a home in high enough concentration to kill or repel a pest like a cockroach or household ant.

A recent email making its way around cyberspace concerns use of club soda to control fire ants. It runs something like this:

"An environmentally friendly cure for fire ants has been announced by Walter Reeves on his Georgia Gardener radio program. Testimonials that it REALLY WORKS are coming in.

"Simply pour two cups of CLUB SODA (carbonated water) directly in the center of a fire ant mound. The carbon dioxide in the water is heavier than air and displaces the oxygen which suffocates the queen and the other ants. The whole colony will be dead within about two days.

"Besides eliminating the ants, club soda leaves no poisonous residue, does not contaminate the ground water, and does not indiscriminately kill other insects. It is not harmful to your pets, soaks into the ground. Each mound must be treated individually and a one liter bottle of club soda will kill 2 to 3 mounds."

First of all, the [Internet watchdog site Snopes.com](#) reports contacting the horticulture specialist Walter Reeves, who denies ever recommending club soda for fire ant control. He did ask listeners to let him know whether they had any success with the treatment, and so far the consensus appears to be negative. To date there is no published research that supports the effectiveness of club soda, nor does the concept seem likely to work given the size of the average fire ant colony gallery and the amount of CO₂ that would have to be injected into the ground to saturate a nest with this admittedly toxic gas.

The [fire ant section of the e-Xtension website](#) is an excellent resource for all things fire ant. This site also takes the position that this method has [not been demonstrated to be effective](#).

On top of this, one of our own Texas Extension entomologists, Wizzie Brown ([whose blog is listed here](#)), tested club soda in a replicated study this summer and got no control. "It's impressive though, when you pour it onto a mound," she told me this morning. Lots of fizzing! Unfortunately the fire ants were not overly impressed.

Being from Austin, TX (whose citizens have proudly adopted the slogan "Keep Austin Weird"), Wizzie is uniquely qualified to test these more unusual remedies. In recent studies she also tested wet and dry molasses (no control) and aspartame (no control) for fire ant control. She takes pride in the fact that her research is also cited in the current [Snopes.com article debunking aspartame as an ant poison](#).

It's important to realize that commercial insecticides are usually the best way to go after serious pests like fire ants or German cockroaches or biting mosquitoes. Fire ant baits remain the most effective, inexpensive and low risk way to control fire ants in backyard- to city park-sized infested areas. Individual mound treatments, no matter how effective, will never provide as good area-wide control of fire ants as an effective broadcast treatment.

There may be some effective home remedies out there, but commercial insecticides are almost always more effective, and often cheaper to use than that "sure-fire", REALLY WORKS, 100% SAFE remedy you hear about on a [mommy blog](#) or over the radio waves. Add to that your expertise as a pest management professional, and you should never get too concerned about losing your job to a hedge apple.

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**Comments or questions
 on this newsletter?
 Contact kvail@utk.edu**

For more information about IPM in Tennessee schools and other facilities, or to view past issues of *Pests and Pesticides in Child-serving Facilities*, please visit schoolipm.utk.edu or utyeah.utk.edu

NATIONAL IPM INFORMATION
 eXtension's Pest Management In and Around Structures: Urban Integrated Pest Management
<http://www.extension.org/Urban%20Integrated%20Pest%20Management>

National School IPM
schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu/

IPM in Schools Texas
schoolipm.tamu.edu/resources.htm

IPM Institute of North America
www.ipminstitute.org/

School IPM PMSP—all schools IPM by 2015
http://www.ipminstitute.org/school_ipm_2015.htm

National Pest Management Association IPM
www.whatisipm.org/

EPA schools
www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm/schoolipm/index.html

For further information about the IPM program at your school or in your county, contact your county Extension Agent or the school IPM Coordinator. For county agent contact information, please visit www.agriculture.utk.edu/personnel/districts_counties/default.asp

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Precautionary Statement

To protect people and the environment, pesticides should be used safely. This is everyone's responsibility, especially the user. Read and follow label directions carefully before you buy, mix, apply, store or dispose of a pesticide. According to laws regulating pesticides, they must be used only as directed by the label.

Disclaimer

This publication contains pesticide recommendations that are subject to change at any time. The recommendations in this publication are provided only as a guide. It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. The label always takes precedence over the recommendations found in this publication.

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