

# KENTUCKY NURSERY BULLETIN

UK NURSERY CROPS TEAM

JULY 2022

## Drier Than Average Conditions Expected in August

The NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting an above average chance for warmer than average conditions throughout the month of August for the Commonwealth.

For precipitation, drier than average conditions are expected for at least the first half of August, with longer range outlooks forecasting the same pattern for the western part of Kentucky. Southeastern Kentucky has an equal chance of being wetter or drier than average for the latter half of the month.

University of Kentucky College of Agriculture has launched a new resource for drought related resources and tools. Available here: <https://drought.ca.uky.edu/>

Overall, the temperature forecast is clear: above average temperatures are expected to dominate the entire month of August, and this goes for much of the continental US.

See **UKAg Weather's Long Range Outlooks** for a variety of forecasts of temperature and precipitation probabilities.



College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service

## NURSERY CROPS EXTENSION & RESEARCH

Tara Watkins  
Extension Associate,  
Nursery Crops  
859.257.0037

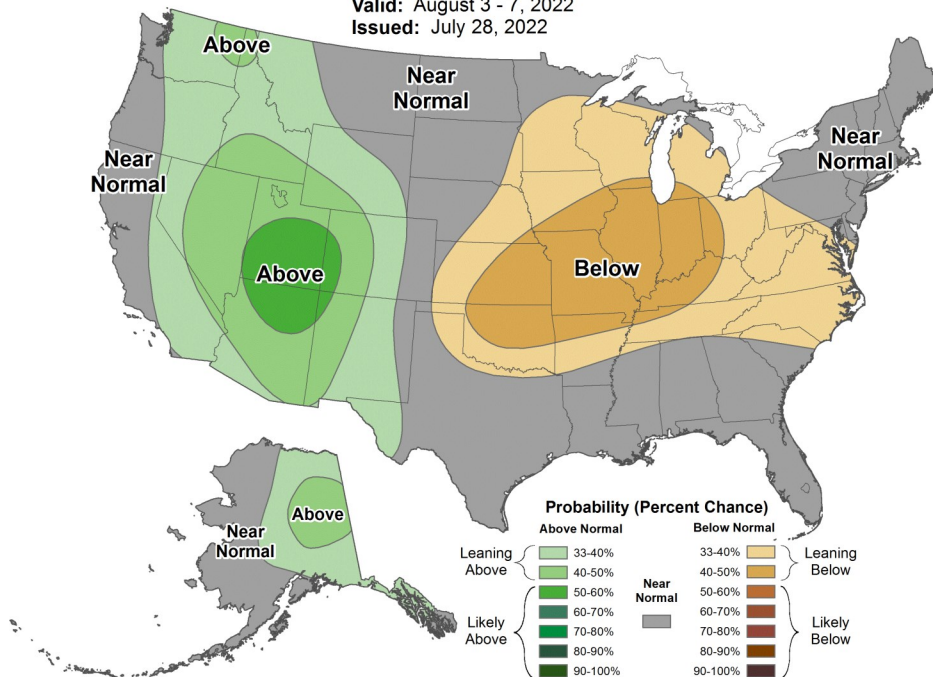
<https://NCER.ca.uky.edu/>

Joshua Knight, Senior Extension  
Associate & Managing Editor



## 6-10 Day Precipitation Outlook

Valid: August 3 - 7, 2022  
Issued: July 28, 2022



Precipitation Probability, August 3-7, 2022

Image: NOAA Climate.gov, 28 JUL 2022

## Fire Ants Gaining Foothold in State

# Fire Ants Gaining a Foothold in the State

*Jonathan Larson, Extension Specialist, Entomology*

*Joe Collins, Deputy State Entomologist*

Fire ants have long been found further south of Kentucky. Since 2000, there has been an increase in issues in the Land Between the Lakes area of our state. Surveys in that area have found multiple mounds of ants but Kentucky has not been fully listed as "invaded" as these mounds are eliminated once found. While regulatory efforts were focused on the western side of the state, the fire ants were also unknowingly gaining traction on the eastern side. Earlier in 2022, a call from McCreary County Extension led to the confirmation of fire ants on a private residence in that county. The mounds there were treated and follow up inspections showed that the treatment had been successful. Unfortunately, this turned out to not be the only site. As of July 2022, there are now multiple confirmed finds in both McCreary and Whitley counties.

## Fire ant basics

There are two main species of fire ants that are considered invasive species in the US. The red imported fire ant is the more widely distributed pest, becoming widespread in the US during the 1940's. The less famous species, the black imported fire ant, is more cold tolerant than their red cousin. Further complicating the situation, these species can mate and hybridize, creating an even more cold hardy species. The ants found in eastern Kentucky have been hybrids.



Figure 1: Fire ant workers are usually between 1/8th and 1/4th in. long and can be dark red or dark brown. The easiest way to identify them in the field is if the nest is touched the ants are famous for "boiling out" of the mound to find the intruder.

Photo by Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

## How did they get here?

Most likely the pests were imported with the movement of material like pine straw, mulch/compost or possibly soil. Fire ants can be inadvertently moved around thanks to goods like these but can also be moved in hay bales or even heavy machinery such as earth moving equipment. They can also float as an ant "life raft" when there are floods. It is thought that may be how they arrived in western Kentucky. Once they were introduced, the colonies have gotten larger and eventually reproduced by sending out new queens to found their own nests.

## Why is this an issue?

**The biggest issue with fire ants is their medical hazard.** They will defend their nest by biting the offending animal and while clamped on, each individual ant can sting multiple times. The sting area tends to hurt and burn, then turn red, and eventually a pustule will form that can resemble a pimple. However, some individuals are allergic to fire ant stings which increases the health threat.

Beyond their sting hazard, they can impact our economy as well. Kentucky is not considered an "infested" state. With the western counties periodically experiencing new colonies, new locations in the east could mean could lead to quarantines put in place to try and curb the spread. This would lead to restrictions in the movement of certain goods out of quarantined counties. If implemented, a quarantine would limit the movement of nursery stock as well as hay, construction equipment, and other goods.

*Continued on next page...*

Fire ants have also been found to feed on some crop plants reducing their yields and marketability. They can also be an added stressor for some livestock.



Figure 2: Fire ant mounds are often found in sunny areas with well-drained soil. They can be in urban and rural areas and are often 18-24 inches tall.

Photo by Rebekah D. Wallace, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

### What to do?

If you suspect you have a fire ant mound on your property, or know where one might be, please report it so that we can properly identify areas where they are occurring. To report a mound, it is helpful to send a picture along with an address or GPS coordinates. Reporting can be done in several ways:

Email

Joe Collins  
[joe.collins@uky.edu](mailto:joe.collins@uky.edu)

Contact the **UK Entomology Facebook** page through Kentucky Bugs on that platform.

Your **local county Extension office** can help put you in contact with us as well.

The University of Kentucky's **Nursery Crop Extension Research Team** is based out of two locations across the bluegrass to better serve our producers.

The **University of Kentucky Research and Education Center (UKREC)** in **Princeton** serves western Kentucky producers while our facilities and personnel on main campus in **Lexington** serve central and eastern Kentucky producers.

Check out our [YouTube Channel!](#)

Like us on [facebook!](#)

## Contact Us

### Western Kentucky

UK Research & Education Center  
1205 Hopkinsville Street  
P.O. Box 496  
Princeton, KY 42445  
270-365-7541

### Central / Eastern Kentucky

UK Main Campus  
Horticulture Department  
N-318 Ag. Science Center North  
859-257-1273

Visit us on the web at

<https://NCER.ca.uky.edu/>

An Equal Opportunity University | University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture