Managing Giant African Snail (GAS) in the Field and Around the Home

Giant African Snail (GAS)

Giant African Snail (*Lissachatina fulica*) can cause major destruction to crops, loss of income and may even cause human health problems. This pest can produce approximately four hundred eggs in one year. Eggs hatch within eight to twelve days. Snails become sexually mature in five months and can live approximately nine years. Therefore, management is critical in preventing the multiplication and spread of this pest.

What is the problem?

- GAS is a scavenger which feeds on both living and decaying vegetation. This pest feeds on over 500 plant species including vegetables, fruit trees, field crops, forest trees and succulent ornamental plants. This means it can cause severe loss of income to farmers/growers.

- GAS has also been known to be a vector of the rat lung worm which can cause *Eosinophilic meningitis* disease.

- GAS feeds on the limestone in concrete to maintain its shell. In the process the slime and droppings deface concrete walls and walkways.

- Dead snails smell and can encourage rodents into the area.

What does the Giant African Snail look like?

The shell of the GAS is reddish brown with cream to yellow stripes running in one direction along the length, from the pointed part of the shell (*Picture 1*). The shell also has seven or more whorls.

Where can GAS be found?

- Under leaves and mulched areas
- Along drains, water courses and damp or moist areas
- On concrete walls and walkways
- In or under garbage
- In soil/dirt
- In or on the wheels of vehicles
- On fruits, vegetables, and planting material

How can I prevent the GAS from my area.

- Practice good sanitation around your area (keep weed growth to a low level; prevent the buildup of garbage, etc.).

- Do not move soil or planting material from infested areas to clean areas.

- Check under vehicles for snails, if you do go into an infested area.

How is GAS spread?

Live snails and eggs can be spread in several ways:
• Movement of soil with snails and eggs
• As a hitchhiker on vehicles
• On planting material
• In garbage
• Through water movement (flooding, water courses)

How can GAS be managed?
The Giant African Snail can be managed using two methods: Non-chemical and Chemical

Non-Chemical Approach:

• Collect and place snails in a container with a fitted cover. (Never touch snails with your bare hands; use plastic gloves or a plastic bag)
• Make a solution by dissolving:
  - 400 grams (2 cups) of cooking salt in 4 litres (1 gallon) of water OR
  - 500 ml (2 cups) of household bleach in 4 litres (1 gallon) of water
• Place snails in either solution (salt or bleach).
• Cover the container and leave for 24 hours (During this time the snails will drown and die).
• Dispose dead snails as follows:
  - Place in garbage bag and send to the land fill
  - Burn in a safe area
  - Bury in a hole at least 60 cm (2 feet) deep

Chemical Approach:

• Use snail and slug bait with the active ingredient Methaldehyde and broadcast (sprinkle) around the home, field or empty lots.
  When this bait is consumed by the adult snails they would stop feeding. Then the snails would eventually die. OR
• Broadcast Iron Phosphate around the home or fields. This is safe to use especially around pets and children.
• Collect and dispose dead snails as follows:
  - Place in garbage bag and send to the land fill
  - Burn in a safe area
  - Bury in a hole at least 60 cm (2 feet) deep

How often should Baiting be carried out?
Since the eggs of the Giant African Snail hatch in approximately eight to twelve days, it is recommended to bait the area every fourteen (14) days. This should continue for a three (3) month period or until there are no signs of Giant African Snails.

Routine scouting (searching) must take place at night to determine if GAS is still present in the area, after the baiting cycle has been completed.

How can fruits and vegetables be sanitized before consumption?
Fruits and vegetables can be sanitized using distilled white vinegar solution or bleach solution to make it safe for consumption.

⇒ Make a solution using 1-2 tablespoons of either vinegar OR bleach in one litre of clean water
⇒ Soak the fruits and vegetables in this solution for 10 – 15 minutes
⇒ Remove from solution
⇒ Wash again in clean water

DO NOT PLACE LIVE SNAILS IN GARBAGE BAGS AND DUMP.
DO NOT BURN OR BURY LIVE SNAILS.

For further information and advice contact your County Agricultural Office

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