



LFA Fact Sheet 4

An improved spreader for ant baits: How to modify a cheap fertilizer spreader so it works more effectively

Often people tell me they spread ant baits like Amdro™, Esteem™, Maxforce™ and others by placing little clumps around where they see the ants. Little Fire Ants have very small nests but there might be thousands of them all around your house. By spreading the bait in just a few places, you might knock out the nests nearby but leave many nests untreated. Its always best to spread the bait as evenly as you can over your entire house-lot.

The easiest and cheapest way to do this is to buy a home fertilizer spreader. Home Depot normally carry the Scott™ brand for around \$15, but there are others on the market that are very similar. They all seem to have 2 major drawbacks:

- the bait “clumps” in the hopper and does not spread evenly. This happens because the agitator built into the hopper is designed for heavier granules like fertilizer and will not agitate the ant bait enough to keep it flowing.
- The spreaders have an adjustable opening that lets you set how much product comes out. This is held open by a spring-loader trigger which needs to be held down the whole time you are applying the bait. After a few minutes, my “trigger finger” begins to hurt from the strain.

Here are some ways you can modify these cheaper spreaders to make them easier to use. You don't need many tools, and its fairly simple¹.



Figure 1.
A Scott™ “Handy Green” fertilizer spreader

¹ Thanks to Jason Reberger who first showed me these tricks a few years ago.

Improving the agitator

The agitator is the orange plastic “T” shaped device in the bottom of the hopper. This can easily be pulled out. Wrap a small cable tie around the stem and tighten the tie as tightly as possible. Then cut it down so an inch or so is left sticking out. The cable tie should wrap around the stem in an anti-clockwise direction when viewed from above so when it is in the hopper, it is wrapped the way shown in the figures below.



Figure 2.
Cable tie ready to be placed onto the agitator stem.



Figure 2.
Cut the cable tie down to leave a one inch end. Cut the tie after placing it onto the stem so it will be easier to tighten



figure 3.
modified agitator in place and ready for use

Locking the trigger

Hold the trigger open at your desired setting. Usually #1 is sufficient, but a better position is half way between #1 and #2². Then drill a small pilot hole and drive a self tapping screw through the assembly so the trigger remains open.



Figure 4.
Screw holding the trigger permanently open.

Some cautions

1. With the opening in the hopper open all the time, be careful not to let bait dribble out of the spreader until you are ready to start
2. any modifications are probably going to void the manufacturer's warranty
3. You do all this at your own risk. I'm not responsible for any damage you may cause to or by the spreader...
4. The spreader shown in this fact sheet is for demonstration purposes only and is not an endorsement or recommendation.

Now you are ready to go. Happy ant killing!

² set the trigger at 2 then manually hold the trigger so the opening on the hopper is bigger than #1 and smaller than #2 while drilling the pilot hole