

staff photo by Eric Evan Le

### Four-H art exhibit

mma Fischer, of Buckholts in Milam County, ong with Celeste Glaser, 8, also of Buckholts, serve Four-H students art work in the G. Rollie White Coliseum Wednesday afternoon. Four-H tudents from all over Texas competed in different

# Natural solution urged for fire ant problem

United Press International AUSTIN — Because im-ported fire ants cannot be eradicated with pesticides, resear-chers should try to develop a natural parasite to control the pesky insect, a University of

Texas zoologist says.

But Dr. Lawrence Gilbert says financing for fire ant research is controlled largely by chemical companies who want to make a profit and politicians who want a quick fix for the problem.

'There's no incentive to solve the problem because it doesn't make anybody any money," Gilbert said. "The chemical companies are not interested in something that can't be patented.

Gilbert, who is director of UT's Brackenridge Field Laboratory, warns that widespread use of pesticides to kill imported fire ants could diminish native ant species, which occur in great numbers in Texas.

'No pest has ever been eradicated," he said. "That's virtually impossible. To do that you'd have to adopt a scorched earth policy and get rid of some good things.
"We have to face the fact that

it's (imported fire ants) one of our ants in Texas and the South," said Gilbert.

Most researchers are looking

that will wipe out imported fire ants, but he said the answer to long-range control may be in natural parasites that now plague native ant species.

In native ants, the parasites, which are phorid flies, complete their life cycles in the ant's body, eventually killing the ants.
"The debate is whether these

particular parasites are potential control agents," he said. "To date, very little research money

has gone into studies of the population biology of ants." Gilbert said opponents of pa-rasite research claim it takes too long, is too expensive and that parasites tend to affect only the worker ants and not the queen

But Gilbert claims that the reduction of worker ants could eventually control the fire ants by reducing the number of worker ants available to compete with other ants for food and ter-

But he said once the use of besticides has begun, the cycle is hard to break because imported fire ants "are much more effective at re-colonizing than native

Gilbert said there is no evidence that fire ants are economically damaging or dangerous, blaming the concept on "media

hype."
"There is no evidence they are anything more than a nui-sance, but there is political press-ure to do something quick." he

said.

The ants, which can afflict a painful sting, were accidentally imported from South America through the port of Mobile, Ala., in 1930.

The mound-building ants reached east Texas in 1956 and now range across 112 of the state's 254 counties. They have also infested all or part of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Puerto Rico.

More than \$250 million has been spent on fire ant insecticides, but Gilbert said the spread of the insects has continued.

The latest chemical touted, Pro-Drone, is being tested by the state Agriculture Department on large plots of land in south Texas. The substance kill ants by interrupting their reproduction

"My objection to Pro-Drone is that it doesn't just kill fire ants, it kills other ants," said Gilbert. "I hey (native ants) are the most resistance (that imported fire ants have). If you wipe out all the competition, guess who'll come back?"

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# "trail Labor Department apologizes or statements to Gov. White

United Press International USTIN — The U.S. Labor rtment apologized to Gov. rk White for remarks made is regional director in Dallas, ng the criticism of the Legisle's failure to extend the life he Texas Employment Comssion was "premature and in-

ropriate." loyd Edwards, regional inistrator, was quoted last k as saying the federal govnent would not assume C's duties or absorb its 4,200 ployees should the state ncy fold. Unless the Legislaextends the TEC, Edwards reporters that unemployt benefits for 150,000 job-Texans could cease by Oct. is comments came after the slature failed to pass a bill would have continued the

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7:00 P.

DAY

PECIAL

Albert Angrisani, assistant secretary of labor employment and out of business under the "sunset" act. training in Washington D.C. Tuesday apologized for the statements.

"Any statements or intervention by the Dallas regional office have been both premature and inappropriate," he said. "I regret that the regional administrator has interpreted state actions and consequences on his own initiative.'

White has been urged by some lawmakers to meet in a special session before Sept. 1 but the governor said last week Texas law allows for a one-year 'phase out" of any agreement not renewed by lawmakers.

The governor said he believes

agency as part of its "sunset" review.

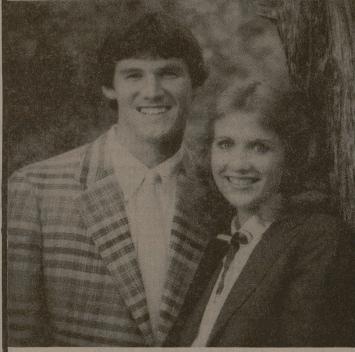
In a mailgram to White,

When the TEC could be salvaged by a legislative vote after Sept. 1, when the TEC technically goes when the technically goes bike in their federal was reported.

In addition to the loss of un-

ployers could face a \$1 billion hike in their federal unemployment taxes through a loss of tax

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