

Red Imported Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*)


Actual size



Origin/Description

Red imported fire ants are native to South America. They are reddish brown in colour, although some have a shiny black abdomen. Worker size ranges from 3 to 6mm.

Impact

Red imported fire ants will repeatedly sting anything that appears a threat, aggressively swarming over the mound to defend their nest. Their sting can be painful and seriously affect some people. They can cause serious disruption to agriculture, recreational activities and natural environments.

Behaviour

Red imported fire ants build mounded nests of fine granular soil in sunny, open areas, for example, lawns and open pastures. Sometimes mounds are built against walls, posts, shrubs and electrical boxes. Mounds vary in size and height depending on colony size (up to 40cm).

Sting

Fierce bee or wasp-like sting. Symptoms include intense burning or itching with a blister forming at the sting site within five hours. A distinctive white pustule develops within a few days. On rare occasions more serious reactions may occur. If you believe you are having a serious allergic reaction seek medical help immediately.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/red-imported-fire-ant>

Tropical Fire Ant (*Solenopsis geminata*)


Actual size



Origin/Description

Native to North America through to northern South America. Orange-brown body 3 to 6mm in length. Very similar in appearance to the red imported fire ant.

Impact

Tropical fire ants can inflict a painful sting. If a colony is disturbed numerous workers will swarm out to aggressively defend the nest. Overseas, tropical fire ants present a major conservation threat as they invade native communities affecting any of the plants and animals found in that community.

Environment

Tropical fire ants prefer open, sunny areas such as barren soil and grassland. Nests are mounds of fine soil around or under clumps of vegetation or other objects. They may also nest around household heat sources such as pipes or fireplaces.

Sting

The tropical fire ant takes its name from the fiery sting that may cause intense burning and itching. People previously stung by these ants may develop an allergic reaction. If you are stung by this ant and develop a red, itchy rash, feel faint or experience difficulty in breathing, seek medical attention immediately.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/tropical-fire-ants>

Little fire ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata*)


Actual size



Origin/Description

Native to Central and South America, the little fire ant is now established in many parts of the Pacific. It is a tiny ant, only 1.5mm long, reddish to golden brown in colour.

Impact

The little fire ants sting can be painful. They can disrupt agriculture and recreational activities with their aggressive stinging.

Behaviour

The little fire ant is a slow moving but very

aggressive ant, attacking anything that may disturb their nest. This ant prefers disturbed habitats such as forest edges, urban and agricultural areas. They nest in twigs and leaf litter and are known to nest in trees, which can make eradication of this ant extremely difficult once established. They feed on insects, seeds, plant nectars and honeydew from sap sucking insects and can negatively impact native communities.

Sting

The sting is usually harmless to humans, but can be painful at first then itchy for up to three days.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/little-fire-ant>



NATIONAL INVASIVE ANTS PROGRAMME

YOU can protect New Zealand from exotic invasive ants.

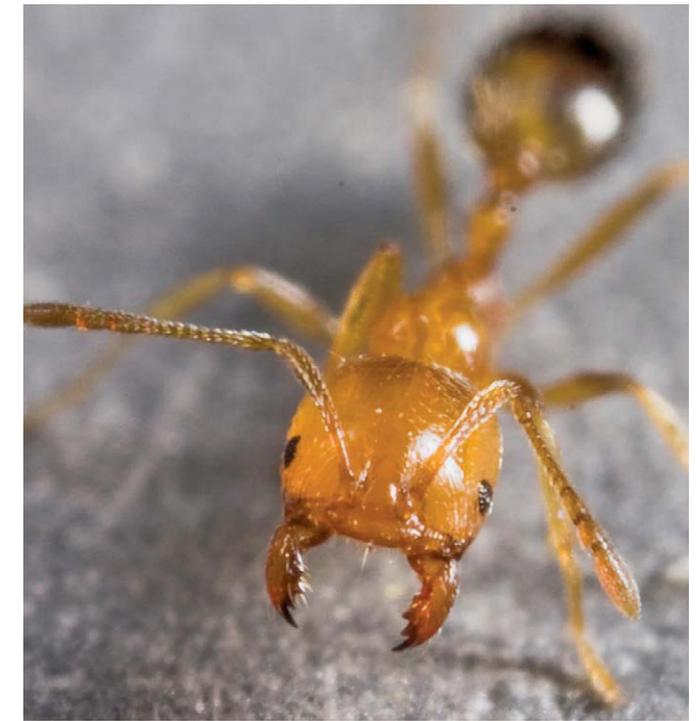
Early detection is the key to the eradication and control of invasive ants. This brochure outlines how to recognise, identify and report known invasive ant species.

If you see any of these ants please contact **MPI PEST AND DISEASE HOTLINE** on **0800 80 99 66**

For more information visit: www.mpi.govt.nz



INVASIVE ANTS



You can help protect New Zealand from exotic invasive ants

Carpenter Ant (*Camponotus sp.*)



Origin/Description

Carpenter ants are widely distributed overseas, including Australia, the Pacific and the US. They are large ants, up to 13mm long, ranging from dark to rusty-orange in colour.

Impact

Carpenter ants are a major urban pest, named for their ability to chew wood. Look out for piles of coarse sawdust dropped by ants as they excavate their nests.

Unlike termites, they do not eat wood but excavate nesting galleries using their strong, saw-like jaws. They can also become a garden pest negatively impacting plants by tending and protecting sap-sucking insects such as aphids.

Behaviour

Carpenter ants are generalist hunters and scavengers mainly of other insects. They will collect plant nectars and tend sap-sucking insects for their honeydew. They can be found nesting in timber structures and in trees, and are active both day and night.

Sting

Carpenter ants do not sting but are capable of inflicting a painful bite.

Singapore Ant (*Monomorium destructor*)



Origin/Description

Of tropical origin, Singapore ants are increasingly spreading into temperate climates by surviving in heated buildings. Singapore ant workers are highly variable in length, ranging from 1.8 to 3.5mm. Two-toned with orange thorax and dark coloured abdomen.

Impact

Singapore ants are capable of inflicting a painful bite. They are a major urban pest in some parts of the world. Foragers gnaw holes in fabric and rubber goods and remove insulation from electric and phone lines. They will feed on almost any food available in houses.

Behaviour

Singapore ants form large colonies with multiple queens. They are most likely to persist inside heated buildings in New Zealand but will nest inside and outside buildings. Singapore ants are slow moving and may take some time to discover food.

Sting

Singapore ants can inflict a painful bite, although generally they do not pose a significant human health risk.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/singapore-ant>

Ghost Ant (*Tapinoma melanocephalum*)



Origin/Description

Of Asian or African origin, ghost ants are tiny at just 1.5 to 2mm long. Dark head, pale almost translucent abdomen and legs (hence “ghost”), they are sometimes difficult to see. They are also known as “black-headed ant”.

Impact

Overseas, ghost ants are a serious household nuisance. They will forage in large numbers in kitchens and bathrooms on sinks, benches and floors seeking sweet foods and protein.

Behaviour

Ghost ants run in quick, erratic movements when disturbed. Workers may emit an acrid, coconut-like odour when crushed. These ants will nest in outdoor flowerpots, under loose bark, or indoor spaces such as cracks, spaces between books, or wall cavities.

Sting

No sting and do not pose a significant human health risk.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/ghost-ants>

Crazy Ant (*Paratrechina longicornis*)



Origin/Description

Of tropical origin, crazy ants are dark brown to black and range from 2.5 to 3mm. They have a thinner body and longer legs and antennae than most ants.

Impact

Crazy ants protect sap-sucking insects for their honeydew which can cause problems for horticulturalists and foresters. In New Zealand they could out-compete and displace native ant species and potentially seriously disrupt natural ecosystems.

Behaviour

Crazy ants nest in warm places such as inside building walls, beneath carpets, in and around rubbish bins, tree and wood cavities or under debris. These ants move in an erratic manner, weaving around very rapidly if disturbed (hence the name crazy).

Sting

No sting but may bite if provoked. Crazy ants pose no significant human health risk.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/black-crazy-ants>

Yellow Crazy Ant (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*)



Origin/Description

Origin is unknown but probably Asian or African, the yellow crazy ant is a pale yellow colour with unusually long legs and antennae. Body length is 4 to 5mm.

Impact

This ant is a major agricultural and environmental pest overseas by protecting sap-sucking insects such as aphids. Their insect tending can result in the destruction of trees and some crops.

Behaviour

Generally, yellow crazy ants nest at the base of trees and plants but can occupy houses. The yellow crazy ant walks in a rapid and erratic manner, especially when disturbed (hence the name crazy).

Sting

Yellow crazy ants do not sting and pose no significant human health risk although they may spray formic acid that may cause localised irritation.

For more information see <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests/yellow-crazy-ant>