



# DON'T SPREAD FIRE ANTS

Fire ants are small, but they can have devastating consequences on the environment, economy and our outdoor way of life. Infestations restrict the use of backyards, parks, playgrounds, beaches and sports fields and damage electrical, irrigation and agricultural equipment. They can also destroy crops and kill native flora, fauna, pets and livestock. Fire ants feed on seeds, insects, spiders, lizards, frogs, birds and mammals and displace or kill off native plants and animals and change whole ecosystems beyond repair.

Large numbers of fire ants can swarm onto a person or animal stinging over and over, causing the sensation of being on fire. Stings can become infected and in rare cases lead to fatal allergic reactions. Their presence limits the ability to export goods to states or countries free of red imported fire ants. If we don't work together and stop them, fire ants could infest all of Australia —costing billions per year and changing our way of life, forever. We need your help.

## Fire ants in South East Queensland

Fire ants were first discovered at the Port of Brisbane in 2001 and

currently infest around 600,000 ha in South East Queensland. The interactive fire ants map on the National Fire Ant Eradication Program's website shows sites that have had fire ants in the last 12 months. They have been found west to Kleinton and the Lockyer Valley and north to Deception Bay.

NSW partners with and contributes funding to the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. This program aims to eradicate fire ants from South-East Queensland by 2032 and has been in place since 2017. Modelling shows that without it, fire ants would have spread west to Longreach, north to Bowen and south to Canberra by now.

## Fire ants are a high risk to NSW

As of the end of August 2023, fire ants have been found 5.5 km from the NSW border at Tallebudgera in Queensland. They have also been found at Mermaid Waters, Tabooba, Kleinton, Carrara, Worongary, Mudgeeraba and Innisplain. The closeness of the South-East Queensland infestation makes fire ants one of the highest biosecurity risks to NSW.

Fire ants are most likely to be found in parts of NSW along the

border with South-East Queensland including the Tweed, Kyogle and Tenterfield local government areas. Fire ants are also highly mobile and can travel undetected by hitching a ride in organic materials that are moved by people. Human-assisted movement is the biggest risk for spreading fire ants into new areas. Fire ants like to nest in soil, manure, potted plants, baled materials, turf, mulch, green waste and quarry products. If you transport these materials from within the fire ant biosecurity zones, you must follow the movement requirements in the Biosecurity Regulation 2016. Moving these materials without mitigating the risk of spreading fire ants is an offence and penalties apply.



FOR MORE INFORMATION HEAD TO:  
[WWW.DPI.NSW.GOV.AU/BIOSECURITY/INSECT-PESTS/FIREANTS](http://WWW.DPI.NSW.GOV.AU/BIOSECURITY/INSECT-PESTS/FIREANTS)

## Fire Ant Identification

Fire ants are aggressive and will swarm when disturbed. Their distinguishable features make them easy to identify against other ant species. Fire ants are:

- copper brown with a darker abdomen
- small, measuring 2–6 mm
- found in a variety of sizes within the one nest
- waist section has two segments
- aggressive behaviour - hundreds of ants will come out of a nest if disturbed, trying to sting over and over

Fire ant nests can look like mounds or flat patches of soil with no obvious entry or exit holes. They are not always visible and can take months to pop up. Fire ants can adapt and survive in most climates and environments around the world. They are usually found in warm, open areas such as:

- lawns, pastures and cropland
- footpaths and driveways
- garden beds and in piles of organic matter
- water sources—taps, dams and irrigation lines
- utility pits—water and gas meters
- cultivated land
- along fence lines
- disturbed soil and newly developed areas.

Look under and next to objects on the ground like timber, logs, rocks, pavers or bricks.

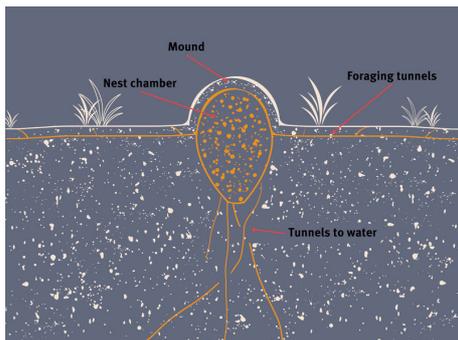
## Interstate Trade

NSW has its own rules when it comes to moving plant material, soil and any related equipment. To



move potted plants (plants in containers grown in potting media including the plant, the container and the potting media) into NSW from known fire ant infested areas in South East Queensland they must be:

- treated with a chemical approved for the control of fire ants before dispatch
- They must be accompanied by one of the following certifying these requirements have been met:
  - > **a Plant Health Certificate**  
*- Issued by inspectors from the Queensland Government to applicants wanting to move fire ant materials into NSW from Queensland)*
  - > **a Plant Health Assurance Certificate that certifies they have been produced and dealt with in accordance with the Interstate Certification Assurance Scheme ICA-39 Treatment of Bulk Growing Media and Potted Plants for Red Imported Fire Ants**  
*- A person, who may represent a business, can become accredited as a biosecurity certifier under the national Interstate Certification Assurance (ICA) Scheme allowing them to issue plant health assurance certificates for produce.*
  - > **a Biosecurity Certificate that certifies they have been produced and dealt with in accordance with BioSecure HACCP Entry Conditions Compliance Procedure Number ECCPRIFA03.**  
*- A person, who may represent a business, can become accredited as a biosecurity certifier for the Biosecure HACCP scheme allowing them to legally self-certify consignments for compliance with interstate movement controls.*



## Receiving Materials

If you are purchasing or receiving materials that may be at risk of carrying fire ants, ensure that your supplier is operating with fire ant-safe practices in place. By taking these simple steps, you can help protect your property and prevent the spread of fire ants into new areas.

### What should I do if I suspect fire ants?

Don't touch the ants or their nest with any part of your body as there is a high chance of being severely stung. Don't disturb or treat the infestation yourself as this can cause the ants to move and spread, or swarm and sting.

If it's safe to do so taking photos will help with identification. If you can only see a nest, gently poke the edge of the nest with a long stick to encourage the ants to come out, making sure you don't get too close.

Keep your camera still and allow ants to walk past the lens. Moving the camera too much makes the image blurry. Use the zoom on your camera to get a close-up image while keeping a safe distance. Put an object like a coin or a key near the ants as a size comparison.

### What should I do if I get stung?

The following guidance is general information and if in doubt, seek medical advice. If you are stung by fire ants, small blisters may form on your skin. Leave the blisters intact, wash with soap and water and apply a cold compress or ice to relieve the swelling and pain.

Stings are rarely life threatening. People prone to allergic reactions could experience severe symptoms and should seek immediate medical attention.

**IF YOU FIND A SUSPECT NEST OR ANTS, REPORT THEM WITHIN 24 HRS AT FIREANTS.ORG.AU OR BY CALLING 13 25 23.**