



Fire ant alert – 5 July 2017

Fire ant program activities well underway in Beerwah

Biosecurity Queensland has confirmed the detection of red imported fire ants in Beerwah on Wednesday 28 June 2017, which is outside the fire ant biosecurity zones. A member of the public, who had been trained in fire ant awareness, reported the sighting to Biosecurity Queensland and should be praised for their vigilance.

Biosecurity Queensland's National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (the Program) officers and fire ant detection dogs responded quickly, with fire ants being confirmed and the one nest destroyed within 24 hours. Program officers destroyed the nest by direct nest injection using contact insecticide, and baited the area around the nest with an insect growth regulator. Fire ant odour detection dogs commenced on-the-ground surveillance on Wednesday 28 June 2017.

A Program field team was deployed on Monday 3 July 2017 to check areas at high risk of infestation within 1 km of the site. Program officers will also inspect areas outside of the 1 km surveillance zone that have an increased risk of being infested due to habitat type or land use activities. Surveillance is expected to take around 2-3 weeks to complete.

The good news is that to date, no further fire ant nests have been found in the area.

Community engagement activities are being conducted over the coming weeks to raise awareness of fire ants in the Beerwah area. The community engagement activities include:

- stationing the department's mobile office unit in community hubs with a live fire ant display and staff available to talk with residents about the detection
- signage on major roads
- an information briefing and training provided for council and key industry personnel
- attendance at the Nambour Garden Expo on Saturday 8 July with live ants on display
- mail delivery of fire ant identification information to nearby residents; and
- targeting local schools and community groups to distribute information through their networks.

The original ant specimens taken from the site underwent genetic testing and it has been determined the nest is related to the Brisbane based colonies. It is unknown at this stage how the fire ant nest arrived in Beerwah, however tracing investigations are continuing which may indicate the possible source of the infestation.

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, individuals and organisations whose activities deal with fire ant carriers such as soil, turf, mulch, hay, potted plants and animal manure, have a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take all reasonable steps to prevent the risk of spreading fire ants. The GBO is applicable to all Queenslanders.

Beerwah is currently outside of our fire ant biosecurity zones. Fire ants detected on properties outside the zones are managed on a case by case basis.

The community should not be alarmed by seeing Program officers and fire ant odour detection dogs conducting surveillance in their streets.

Community and industry partnership is a major contributing factor to the success of the Program. Everyone knows their own property best, so it is essential that residents and businesses check for fire ants and report suspect sightings to Biosecurity Queensland.

For more information on fire ants or to report suspect ants visit www.daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or call 13 25 23.



Fire ant impacts

Fire ants are one of the worst invasive species to reach Australia's shores and can ruin our lifestyle, restricting everyday activities such as barbecues, picnics and sporting events.

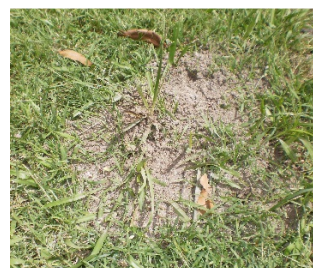
In Australia, more than fifty different crops – grains, fruit and nut, vegetables as well as turf and nursery stock – can be affected by fire ants.

Fire ants can disrupt primary producers' livelihood as they like to live in disturbed soil, manure and hay, making agriculture an obvious target by potentially reducing productivity and yield. They can kill plants, damage equipment and infrastructure, creating medical expenses, increased labour costs, and limiting market access.

Fire ants are very aggressive and voracious feeders on small ground fauna, including insects, spiders, lizards, frogs, birds and mammals. Consequently, fire ants may displace or eliminate some of Australia's unique native ground fauna.

Fire ant identification

The distinguishing features of fire ants are their variations in size between 2-6mm and their coppery-brown colour with darker abdomen. Their sting is incredibly painful and in rare cases can lead to anaphylactic shock and death. Their nests look like mounds of loose soil with no visible entry or exit holes.



The top five places you are likely to find fire ants are:

Residential properties	Rural properties
In and around logs and rocks	Around dams
Gardening materials such as pot plants	Edges of cultivated land
Lawns	Crop land post-harvest
Garden beds	Fence lines
Taps and utility pits	Piles of organic matter

When checking nests for fire ants, gently poke the nest with a long stick and observe the ants that come out. Be careful not to get too close, as fire ants are aggressive and will swarm when disturbed.

You can report fire ants in 2 easy steps

1. Take a close-up photo of any suspicious ants or nests.
2. Send us the photo and complete the 'Yard check report' online at www.daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or call **13 25 23**.

Australia is the closest any country has come to eradicating fire ants, but we still have a lot of work to do to beat this serious invasive pest. We urge residents to continue to check their yards, local parks and recreational areas for fire ants. With continued public vigilance we aim to eradicate them once and for all.

For more information on fire ants or to report suspect ants visit www.daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or call 13 25 23.