

# Red imported fire ant

November 2019

Red Imported Fire Ant (RIFA), *Solenopsis invicta*, is one of the world's most serious and invasive ant pests because of its harmful effects on people, agriculture, flora/fauna, infrastructure and recreational activities.

## What to look for

- Small ants (2–8mm) that vary in size.
- Hard to distinguish from common native ants.
- Reddish brown in colour with a darker abdomen.
- Nests that often have no visible entry holes like other ant nests.
- Young nests can be indistinct or start out as small piles of excavated soil.
- A fiery sting that can blister and form pustules at the sting site.
- Nests in open areas like lawns, firebreaks or fence lines.
- Ants that exhibit aggressive behaviour when disturbed.



## Where to look

For a commercial or development site, you should concentrate your inspections around:

- where organic material such as soil, potted plants, mulch, hay, manure and turf is stored.
- Where machinery used for digging, earthmoving or disturbing of soil is stored
- along fencelines
- where waste material is stored
- areas around buildings, gardens and lawns.

For residential areas, you should focus your inspections on:

- lawns
- footpaths
- garden beds
- taps

In rural areas, be sure to check:

- dams
- edges of cultivated land
- crop land post-harvest
- fence lines and firebreaks
- piles of organic matter.



## Life cycle

- After mating flight, new queens establish colonies and lay 10-20 eggs within 24 hours.
- Eggs hatch within 6-10 days and queen lays more eggs.
- After 1 month, worker ants have opened colony and are tending queen, who lays more eggs.
- After 6-12 months, colony is producing male and female alates (sexually mature ants).
- Newly mated female alates leave nest to establish more colonies.

# Quarantine area restrictions

Red imported fire ant (RIFA) has been detected at Fremantle Port. Treatment and surveillance activities are underway, and a Quarantine Area is in place for parts of Fremantle to eradicate the pest.

## Advice for residents

### Affected items (domestic purposes)

Movement is subject to treatment conditions, such as re-potting or chemical treatment ([see Quarantine Area Notice on DPIRD website](#)).

## Advice for business

### Affected items (commercial purposes)

Movement must be approved by DPIRD. Approval may be subject to conditions, such as chemical treatment.

**(call 9368 3080)**

## Shipping containers and machinery/equipment

### (domestic and commercial purposes)

Movement is subject to visual inspection and if required removal of soil and organic material as per biosecurity cleaning protocols ([available from DPIRD website or on request](#)).

## Affected items

- Potted plants.
- Plant mulch, bark and wood chips.
- Hay and straw.
- Manure.
- Soil (including soil attached to non-potted plants, potting mix, and any form of manufactured potting media, pebbles and gravel).
- Grass and turf (including grass sod with soil attached)
- Soil, turf, grass or other organic matter that has or appears to have been part of a nest or mound built by RIFA.



**Quarantine area restrictions only apply to items that have been in the quarantine area for more than five days**

**Follow quarantine rules and report new or suspicious ant activity**



To MyPestGuide:

- App: **MyPestGuide™ Reporter**  
Website: [mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](http://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au)

To the department's Pest and Disease Information Service:

- Phone: **9368 3080**  
Email: [padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au](mailto:padis@dpiird.wa.gov.au)

**For more information visit**  
[agric.wa.gov.au/rifa](http://agric.wa.gov.au/rifa)