Red imported fire ant

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

To the department’s Pest and Disease Information Service:

- Phone: 9368 3080
  Email: padis@dpird.wa.gov.au

For more information visit agric.wa.gov.au/rifa