

ELECTRIC ANT (*Wasmannia auropunctata* Roger)



Above: Images of Electric Ants: From left - The brood and queen ants, queens and workers, electric ants compared to a coin. Photographs supplied by and © The State of Queensland, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (2006)

Current Situation

The exotic pest commonly known as the Electric Ant or Little Fire Ant (*Wasmannia auropunctata* Roger) was confirmed in mid May at Smithfield, a northern Cairns suburb.

The infestation was found in bedding sand under paving stones around a domestic swimming pool, and under pot plants in the same area.

Residents reported the infestation after they had experienced aggressive and numerous painful stings.

To date, ground surveys have indicated that 18 detections have been confirmed within a 300m radius of the initial detection.

The Queensland Department of Primary Industries is controlling the ants by using insecticide treated baits. The foraging ants collect the bait and return to the nests where they are fed to the rest of the colony including the Queen. The Queen dies and, as it is the only reproducing ant, the colony is destroyed. For further updates go to www.dpi.qld.gov.au and follow the links.

What are the Victorian Requirements?

The Plant Standards Branch of the Department of Primary Industries has introduced **restrictions** to prevent the importation of Electric Ants into Victoria.

The new requirements restrict the importation of any material capable of harbouring Electric Ant from Queensland. Please refer to the attached document for a detailed description of the new requirements or go to the Plant Standards web page.

About the Electric Ant?

The Electric Ant is native to Central and South America. It has since established in West Indies, Mexico, West Africa, Galapagos Islands, New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands.

It's impact is similar to Red Imported Fire Ants, in that it injects powerful venom when it stings.

Electric Ants spread mostly through people with the movement of plants, plant materials and products or edible material. Once the ant species has established it is known to spread up to 170m per year.

What To Look For

- Adults are very small, about 1.5mm in length and ginger coloured.
- The ants tend to nest under leaf debris and stones, in rotten limbs or in trees. They have been known to nest in houses, infested beds, furniture and food.
- They produce painful long-lasting stings often resulting in a red and itchy pimples. Sometimes a severe allergic reaction may occur.
- The ant has been known to attack pets as the ants are attracted to pet food.

**To Report Suspect Electric Ants
Call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline**

1800 084 881

**For Further Information
visit the Plant Standards web page
www.dpi.vic.gov.au/psb**