

Fact sheet

October 2019

Coastal brown ants (*Pheidole megacephala*)

Summary

Coastal brown ants (*Pheidole megacephala*), also called big-headed ants, are an introduced species to Australia and a major pest ant species in Western Australia. There are two very different-sized 'castes' (types) of worker ants, with the larger-headed ant making up about 1 per cent of the population.



Where are they found?

Often seen in lawns and in brick paving, excavating large amounts of sand from between cracks. These ants are specialists in invading disturbed areas, making them ideally suited to the urban environment. If present in high numbers, they may enter the home to forage for fat and protein rich food.

Damage

If left untreated these ants may excavate so extensively that brick paving becomes destabilised. Roots of plants and lawn can become too aerated from soil excavation that the plants show signs of water stress.

Treatment

Granular baits containing hydramethylnon are recommended for control and are registered for coastal brown ants. These products can be purchased from garden centres, hardware stores and agricultural chemical retailers. Read label and apply as directed.

Watch out!

Ants are often difficult to identify! There are a number of ants that have not established in Western Australia, but could significantly impact our outdoor lifestyle and WA's agricultural industries and environment. See overleaf for reportable species!

Exotic ant threats to WA

Under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act) the introduction of these ants into WA is prohibited and **any suspect sightings must be reported**. Below are a few species we are particularly concerned about.



Browsing ant (*Lepisiota frauenfeldi*)

Native to southern Europe, they thrive in a Mediterranean climate and are ideally suited to Australian conditions. These aggressive ants form multi-queened super-colonies, quickly reaching very high populations and displacing native ant species and other invertebrates. They are also a significant horticultural and domestic pest. There have been a number of incursions in Australia, although all known infestations are under eradication.



Red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*)

One of the most serious ant pests in the world. These ants are aggressive, particularly near the nest and inflict a painful sting. They are present in south east Queensland and they could accidentally be imported into Western Australia.



Electric ants (*Wasmannia auropunctata*)

One of the world's worst invasive species, with a painful sting that will impact on outdoor lifestyle, the environment and agricultural industries. These ants are currently in northern Queensland and eradication efforts are underway.



Yellow crazy ants (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*)

Ability to spray formic acid which causes burning and irritates the skin and eyes of animals and humans. Found in the Pacific region and on Christmas Island, this ant has also spread extensively since arriving in Queensland.



Carpenter ants (*Camponotus* spp.)

Elsewhere in the world there are *Camponotus* species that are pests of timber and like termites, if left unchecked can cause extensive damage to structural timber and furniture.

Reporting options

Report unfamiliar, problematic or possible exotic pests via the options below:

- Pest and Disease Information Service (08) 9368 3080 or padis@dpird.wa.gov.au
- MyPestGuide™ Reporter App
- mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au

For more information, see agric.wa.gov.au/ants

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ABN: 18 951 343 745