



European Fire Ant

One of the biggest threats to private and public recreational activities is the spread and infestation of European fire ants. These ants pose a threat to human health and safety and have the potential to damage the environment, the economy and much more if left untreated. Early detection and rapid response is the best plan of action to keep these ants out of our vulnerable neighborhoods and parkways.

Identification:

- Red/brown in color; often with a darker head and lighter abdomen and thorax
- 4-5 mm in length
- behaviour consists of rapid swarming and readily stinging if nest site is disturbed

Favoured Habitat:

- Warm and humid/moist areas
- Paving stones
- Wood on the ground
- Lawn ornaments and clutter
- Lawns and raised garden beds

Nest Identification:

- Nests do not form obvious above ground mounds
- Small amount of disturbed soil visible for young nests (first 2 weeks only)



Possible Sources

European fire ants can be introduced into your yard by a variety of different ways:



1) Topsoil and other soil products may be contaminated with European fire ants so it is important to check a small portion of the soil for ants first before using it on your property.



2) Potted plants are another potential vector of transport for these little pests. Be sure to tap the sides of any new potted plants you intend to purchase to check for ants that may have hitched a ride.

Health and Safety

If you get stung by European fire ants you can expect to experience the following symptoms:

- Localized burning (30 minutes to 2 hours) at the sting site
- Minor swelling
- Itching and redness (few days to a week)

If you experience more severe symptoms than those mentioned above you should contact **Health-LinkBC** by dialing **8-1-1**, any time of day or night, for symptom advice.

If you have an extreme allergic reaction seek emergency care immediately.

Think You Have Fire Ants?

Collect samples, complete necessary form and ship to:

Collection/shipping instructions:

- Collect on a cool morning; ants are less likely to sting.
- Scoop some of the nest into a bucket or pan of soapy water.
- Remove dead ants, put in small water-tight container, and add some alcohol (clear alcohols such as rubbing alcohol or vodka/ gin work best).
- Put the case in a sealed baggie
- Download and complete the necessary form at www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/alien_form.pdf and mail it to the address below (write "UN 1170- Limited Quantity" on the front to notify the post office that < 100 ml of alcohol is present).

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Prevention and Possible Controls

- Remove objects in your yard that are favoured habitats and water lawns and raised garden beds sparingly.
- If ants are discovered you may try control techniques such as introducing fake nest sites via paving stones and periodically torching/freezing colonies that settle underneath.
- A level of success has additionally been reported with the use of the pesticide AntOut which contains the active ingredient Permethrin. This compound can reside actively in the soil for up to 40 days. Users should follow label instructions and not spray flowers.

For More Information

To report European fire ant infestations contact your local government or the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society. NOTE: only known outbreak in the RDOS is Naramata. Additional information on European fire ants can be found on the following websites:

- Dr. Robert Higgins, Thompson Rivers University Research: www.tru.ca/faculty/rhiggins
- BC Provincial government: www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/invasive-species/fire_ants.htm

oasiss

Okanagan and Similkameen
Invasive Species Society

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Photo credit: Sean McCann and Gary Alpert, Harvard University, bugwood.org