

# Fact sheet

October 2019

## Meat ants (*Iridomyrmex purpureus*)

### Summary

Meat ants (*Iridomyrmex purpureus*) are native to Australia and are most common in country areas. These ants do not sting but are very territorial and will bite aggressively when disturbed.

### Where are they found?

Meat ants build large nests which resemble roughly circular low lying mounds, often covered with small pebbles and free of any vegetation. The mounds are usually located in open, sunny areas.



### Damage

These ants do not damage or nest in buildings. They can be a nuisance because of their aggressive territorial behaviour and can bite people, pets and livestock. They are also known to transport aphids and scale insects onto trees in orchards which encourage outbreaks of these pests.

### Treatment

Any insecticide sprays registered for ant control can be used to treat meat ant mounds and greatly reduce or eliminate meat ant numbers; registered chemicals include bifenthrin, permethrin and chlorpyrifos. Follow the mixing instructions on the pack and spray the mounds, including approximately 100 mL down every hole. These spray products can be purchased from garden centres, hardware stores and agricultural chemical retailers.

### 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](mailto:padis@dpird.wa.gov.au)
- MyPestGuide™ Reporter App
- [mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au](http://mypestguide.agric.wa.gov.au)

For more information, see [agric.wa.gov.au/ants](http://agric.wa.gov.au/ants)

---

### Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

Copyright © State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) 2019

ABN: 18 951 343 745