

Fact sheet

October 2019

White footed house ants (*Technomyrmex* spp.)

Summary

White footed house ants (*Technomyrmex jocosus* or *T. albipes*) are a major widespread pest ant species. Their exact origin is not known, however *T. jocosus* is thought to be native and *T. albipes* exotic. These ants do not bite or sting.

Where are they found?

These ants can be seen in the home, sometimes in high numbers foraging in kitchens and bathrooms. They are more active at night and prefer sweet liquids and foods.



White footed house ants on food

Damage

These ants rarely cause direct damage but are considered household pests as they are one of the few ant species that will nest inside. They can be found nesting in areas such as roof and wall spaces, electrical equipment, rolled up awnings, pot plants, and in-between flat packed items. They may also infest electrical items such as kettles, microwave ovens or clock radios.

Treatment

Control of these ants when numbers are low is advisable. When numbers are high and multiple nests have been established, control can be increasingly difficult. If nests are exposed they can be sprayed with fly spray, otherwise baits containing borates (borax) are effective for this sweet-feeding ant species. There are also gel baits now available containing the active ingredients thiamethoxam or indoxacarb that are effective and can be sourced online. Evaporation of baits can be minimised by placing in a sealed container and drilling a few holes above the bait level to allow access by ants. Once ants begin feeding, do not disturb the bait. Products are available from garden centres, supermarkets and hardware stores.

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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