Wet Tropics Management Authority's
Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program

Report card

2022–26



This program is jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland governments.

WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

YELLOW CRAZY ANT ERADICATION

Queensland Government

Australian Government

Summary

9,874
hectares surveyed

1,679
residential properties free from infestation

1,214
hectares eradicated

63
hectares eradicated in the World Heritage Area

1,156
hectares of new infestation detected and managed

From July 2022 to June 2026, the Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) delivered the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program under joint Australian and Queensland government funding, making significant progress towards eradication.

During the funding period, 1,214 hectares were declared eradicated, including 63.3 hectares within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and 1,679 residential properties were declared free of yellow crazy ants.

A June 2025 independent review confirmed WTMA remains on track to achieve eradication. Continued investment and community support will be critical to completing eradication and protecting the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, a globally significant environmental asset that underpins the region's tourism and agricultural economy and is the living cultural landscape of Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples.



Timeline of eradications 2022–26

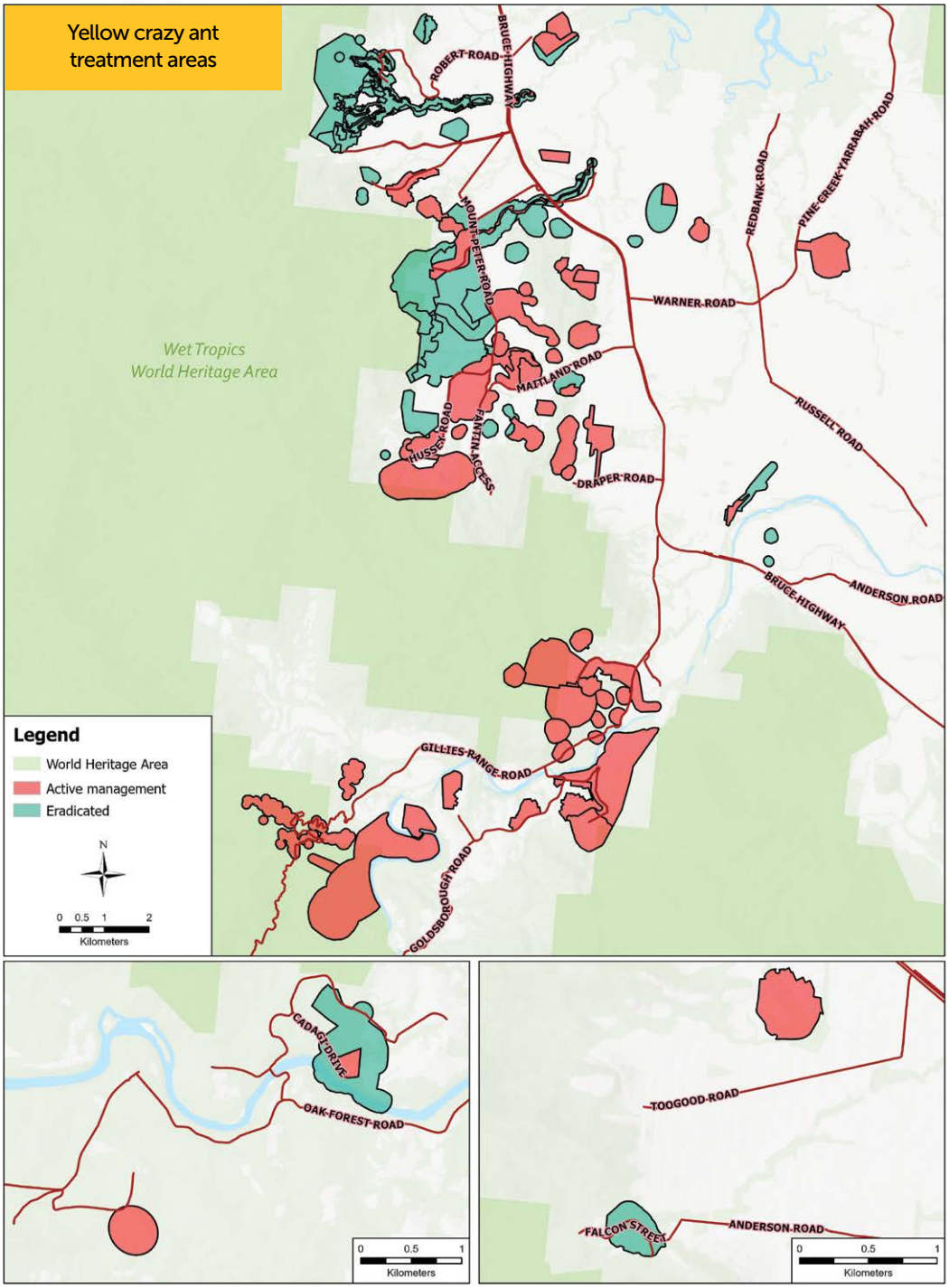


World's largest yellow crazy ant eradication

Since 2013, more than 1,255 hectares have been declared eradicated across rainforest, farmland and residential areas in and around the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, representing the world's largest recorded yellow crazy ant eradication. Between July 2022 and June 2026, 1,214.4 hectares and 1,679 residential properties were declared free of yellow crazy ants, **accounting for 97% of eradications throughout the life of the Eradication Program**.

30 sites progressed from broadscale treatment into survey and post-treatment validation phases, reflecting growing confidence that yellow crazy ants have been removed from large parts of the managed area.

New infestations detected in recent years, particularly around Goldsborough, Little Mulgrave and the Gillies Highway corridor, demonstrate the ongoing need for surveillance and rapid response. Resources have progressively shifted from long-term infestation sites in Bentley Park, Edmonton and Mount Peter to these newer infestation areas.



November 2024
180ha

Technology

Drone technology became a core operational capability, improving the speed, precision and efficiency of yellow crazy ant treatment operations. Early trials demonstrated that drones could distribute bait more consistently than hand treatment, leading to the purchase of an agricultural drone, a DJI Agras T10, in 2024 and the integration of drone baiting into routine operations.

Drones complement existing treatment methods by filling the gap between helicopters and ground crews. They are particularly effective in areas that are too small for helicopters but too large or difficult to treat by hand, while also enabling rapid responses to new detections and short weather windows.

In-house drone capability was established through specialised licensing, pilot qualifications and operational training, enabling staff to independently deliver aerial treatment. Advanced terrain-following workflows were also developed to improve bait application across steep and complex landscapes.

In 2026, treatment capacity was further strengthened through the purchase of a larger DJI Agras T50 drone, increasing operational flexibility and treatment efficiency. The drone's large payload capacity has enhanced the ability to deliver bait across difficult terrain. Drone operations now account for approximately 20% of all treatment delivery.



2,751,034
points surveyed

304
hectares surveyed by odour-detection dogs

6,395
hectares treated

529
hectares treated by drone

30
treatment areas progressed from broadscale treatment into surveillance and validation

June 2025
343ha

July 2025
70ha

August 2025
3ha

February 2026
9ha

April 2026
171ha



Partnerships are key

Community partnerships are critical to the success of WTMA's Eradication Program. Residents, landholders, farmers, businesses and government agencies support eradication efforts by providing property access, reporting suspect ants and assisting with treatment and surveillance activities.

Collaboration with the sugar industry has helped reduce the risk of accidental spread, while the long-standing partnership with James Cook University has strengthened the science underpinning eradication decisions. Kuranda Envirocare and its volunteers have also played an important role in building community awareness and support.

Regular engagement with Biosecurity Queensland's National Electric Ant Eradication Program helped both programs to support residents to identify and report suspect ants.

Continued community support remains essential to achieving the goal of eradicating yellow crazy ants from within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.





Research

Between 2022 and 2026, research undertaken through the WTMA and James Cook University partnership improved understanding of yellow crazy ant impacts and informed more effective treatment, surveillance and eradication strategies. Findings confirmed significant ecological impacts of yellow crazy ants, demonstrated recovery of native ant communities following treatment, and strengthened eradication confidence through advances in Confidence in Absence modelling, eDNA, genetics and detection methods. These tools improved WTMA's ability to detect infestations, trace spread pathways and make evidence-based eradication decisions. The 2025 independent review highlighted research as an important factor in improving program effectiveness and supporting confidence that eradication can be achieved.



Next steps towards eradication

Significant progress has been achieved since 2013, including the world's largest recorded yellow crazy ant eradication and protection of communities, agriculture and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. New detections in recent years highlight the need for continued surveillance, treatment and investment.

To build on this progress, the Australian and Queensland governments committed a further $12 million ($6 million each) to continue the program from July 2026 to June 2028. This funding supports treatment of active infestations, rapid response to new detections and progression of sites through the final stages of eradication.

Beyond June 2028, additional investment will be required to complete eradication. A proposed 10-year funding strategy outlines the sustained effort needed to maintain surveillance, respond to emerging threats and protect the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, an environmental, cultural and economic asset of national significance, for future generations.

Eradication remains achievable

An independent review by Lois Ransom (Independent consultant), Elissa van Oosterhout (Independent consultant) and Susie Collins (DAFF) completed in June 2025 confirmed that WTMA is making significant progress and remains on track to achieve eradication with continued funding and support. The review found the program is operating to a high standard, underpinned by strong governance, scientific rigour and sound financial management.

The review recognised the contribution of staff and the strong partnerships with residents, industry, Traditional Owners, researchers and all levels of government. It also highlighted the program's innovative science, advanced GIS capability and commitment to continuous improvement.

The findings confirm WTMA as a capable, well-governed agency delivering measurable results against one of the world's worst invasive species.

The review identified that ongoing investment is critical to maintaining eradication progress, warning that failure to sustain this commitment could negate gains already made and increase the risk of widespread environmental impacts across Far North Queensland and the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

AntZone



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MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

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