

Yellow Crazy Ants in Cairns and Kuranda

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

HANDBOOK

Your guide to understanding yellow crazy ants, their impacts and what you can do at work to help stop the spread



WET TROPICS
MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY



Yellow crazy ants may be small, but they can have devastating consequences for your business or industry

They also pose a significant threat to the environment, wildlife and people's lifestyles.

Yellow crazy ants were first detected in Cairns in 2001 and in Kuranda in 2014.

They are native to Southeast Asia and have been spread around the world via international trade and shipping.

The Wet Tropics Management Authority established the Yellow Crazy Ant Eradication Program in 2013 to eradicate these invasive ants from areas within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Through it's delivery of the Eradication Program, WTMA is recognised as a national and global leader in invasive ant management. The success of the program is a world-leading example of what strong leadership, community partnerships and science-driven management can achieve.

Active participation and support from the community, stakeholders, industry and landholders have been critical to its ongoing success.

Following simple yellow crazy ant-safe practices can safeguard you, your staff and your livelihood.



What are yellow crazy ants?

Yellow crazy ants are named for their fast, erratic movement when disturbed.

They are slender, between 3 and 4mm in length and have long antennae and legs.

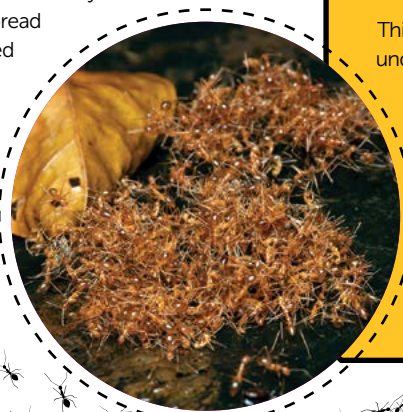
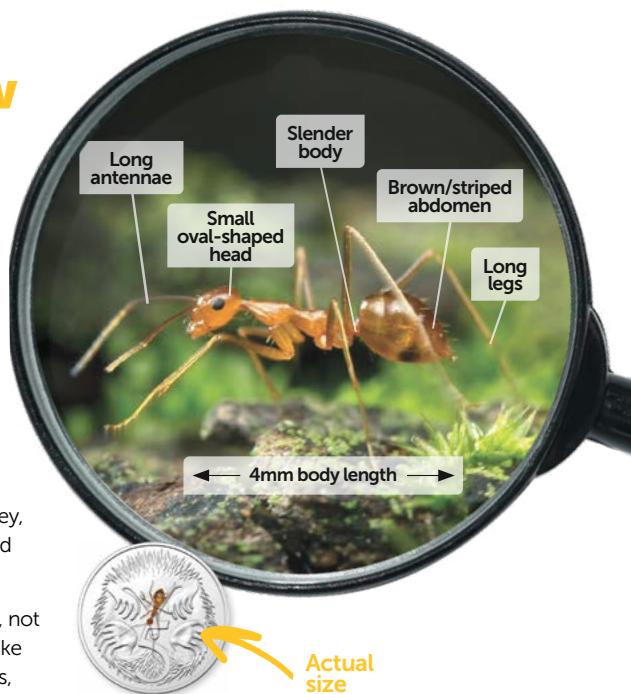
Yellow crazy ants are golden-brown with a darker brown abdomen that is sometimes striped.

Yellow crazy ants do not bite or sting - they spray formic acid to subdue their prey, immobilising or blinding invertebrates and other small animals.

Yellow crazy ant nests are highly variable, not obvious and can be hard to spot. They take advantage of structures such as utility pits, sediment barriers, pallets of timber and tree roots but can also nest in loose leaf litter and organic material.

Yellow crazy ants readily collaborate and form super-colonies: large, interconnected networks of nests that can contain hundreds of queens and millions of ants. Their rate of reproduction can be extremely high.

Once established, infestations can rapidly expand by up to 100m a year and can also spread by being washed downstream along waterways.



Yellow crazy ants are classed as restricted biosecurity matter under the *Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014*.

Everyone has a **general biosecurity obligation** to prevent or minimise the spread of these highly invasive ants.

This means businesses are required under the Act to take reasonable steps to ensure you are aware of and comply with any requirements.

When necessary, Biosecurity Queensland will take formal compliance action to ensure an individual, business or other organisation improves the way they manage biosecurity risks.

Impact of yellow crazy ants

The ongoing cost of eradicating yellow crazy ants from areas within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is small when compared to the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on the region.

Industry

Infestations in development areas, such as residential and light industrial, can lead to further spread and affect land and property values.

Yellow crazy ants can result in economic losses for businesses as they might not be able to conduct their normal operations.

Left uncontrolled, yellow crazy ants could spread to nearby businesses or properties, which could damage your personal or professional reputation.

Agriculture

Yellow crazy ants can reduce yields in sugarcane and other crops, adversely affecting farmers bottom line.

In dense infestations, yellow crazy ants encourage the growth of scale insects, which are a sugar source for the ants.

High numbers of scale insects can reduce crop yields and lead to outbreaks of sooty mould.





Environment

Yellow crazy ants can permanently alter or devastate entire ecosystems.

They prey on native wildlife, including small reptiles, frogs, nesting birds, insects and other invertebrates.

They out-compete or kill native ant species while larger animals such as mammals and birds are pushed out of their habitat, unable to cope with the high numbers of acid-spraying ants.



Lifestyle

Yellow crazy ants can significantly affect the quality of life of people living with the ants in and around their homes.

The ants spray formic acid, which is 10 times stronger than vinegar, at any potential threat including humans as well as domestic pets and animals.

In heavy infestations the ants may occupy electrical boxes, utility pits and other equipment, with the potential to cause short circuits and other damage.



Protecting the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area stretches along the northeast coast of Australia for some 450km and is globally significant for its outstanding natural values.

Encompassing almost 900,000ha of mostly tropical rainforest, this stunningly beautiful area is extremely important for its rich and unique biodiversity.

It provides refuge for many isolated populations of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else.

Because of its exceptionally high levels of diversity, the World Heritage Area is recognised as one of Earth's 36 biodiversity hotspots.



While covering only 0.12% of Australia, the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area contains an incredible:



Yellow crazy ant infestations reduce an area's biodiversity, and for places with a high number of endemic species, such as the Wet Tropics, this can be catastrophic.

WTMA's Eradication Program was established to eradicate yellow crazy ants from within and adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, protecting it for generations to come.

This continues to be the main objective of the Eradication Program.

Working in or near a yellow crazy ant infestation area

If you work in Cairns or Kuranda your business or workplace could be in or near a yellow crazy ant infestation area.

Community awareness, support and vigilance are critical for detecting new infestations and stopping the spread of yellow crazy ants.

The most common way yellow crazy ants are spread is through human-assisted movement.

Yellow crazy ants can be found in a range of materials including soil, mulch, vegetation, green waste, machinery and construction materials.

Activities such as illegal dumping and moving materials, machinery or soil from an infested site can easily spread these invasive ants.

Cleaning all equipment and machinery, including slashers, excavators, wheelbarrows and other gear, ensures it is free from soil and other materials that yellow crazy ants like to nest in.

Doing this means you are helping prevent the spread of yellow crazy ants and meeting your general biosecurity obligations.



How your business can help



Use **AntZone** to see if you are working in or near a yellow crazy ant infestation area



Order your free **YCA Information Pack** for you and your staff



Book a free **Toolbox Talk** by calling **07 4241 0525** to equip your team with essential knowledge about yellow crazy ants





AntZone

Are you working in an AntZone?

AntZone is a user-friendly online map showing where yellow crazy ant and electric ant infestations are found.

AntZone is best accessed via a smartphone and allows you to search a particular address to learn about any type of invasive ant infestations in your selected area.

It was designed to help industry and businesses identify which program is managing the infestation and what your responsibilities are.

If you need to move materials, including soil, mulch, vegetation, green waste and quarry materials, check AntZone to ensure you are not taking the risk of spreading invasive ants.

If you work in or near an infestation treatment area you have a general biosecurity obligation to prevent or minimise the spread of yellow crazy ants under the Queensland Biosecurity Act 2014.



Check

if you are in an invasive ant zone

Visit qld.gov.au/antzone



How can you help?

Yellow crazy ant prevention starts with you.

Have you spotted a suspicious ant at your workplace?

Send a picture or short video for identification to yca@wtma.qld.gov.au, please do not forget to include your name, suburb and contact details.

You can also report suspicious ants using [AntZone](#).

Follow WTMA's Eradication Program on Facebook [@ycawettropics](#) to learn more and connect with our team.

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