

STAMP OUT



Tramp Ants



Image courtesy of Qld Govt

Yellow crazy ant

We need YOU to help us stamp out the tramp ants!

Two species of highly invasive ants, electric ants and yellow crazy ants, are found in Far North Queensland. These tramp ants, so-called because of their tendency to hitch a ride with people, are among the world's 100 worst invasive species. They are a serious social, economic, agricultural and environmental pest, capable of inflicting devastating impacts on our tropical outdoor lifestyle, tourism and agricultural industries, pets and livestock, and the unique native plants and animals of our World Heritage landscape.

Conservation Volunteers, with funding from the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country initiative, and supported by the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Biosecurity Queensland, is conducting surveillance along the boundary of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, between Palm Cove and Edmonton and around Bingil Bay and Mission Beach.

Conservation Volunteers will be laying baits, talking to local residents and organising awareness-raising events in these areas. Please help by spreading the word and allowing volunteers to inspect your property. The ants are easier to eradicate if identified early, but may severely impact on your family and pets if not treated swiftly.

How you can help:

- Support Conservation Volunteers when they visit you
- Learn more about electric ants and yellow crazy ants:
http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/4790_6653.htm
- Inspect all purchases of plants and soil for tramp ants
- Check your camping equipment and picnic gear too
- Spray pot plants with insecticide when moving home
- Only dispose of vegetation, plants and soil at approved council sites
- Report illegal dump sites to:
Cairns Regional Council on 4044 3044
Cassowary Coast Regional Council on 4030 2222
Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23
- If you find suspected tramp ants, call:
Biosecurity Queensland 13 25 23.

*Don't delay - remember, early detection of tramp ants is vital.
The longer you wait, the harder it is to get rid of them.*

Yellow crazy ants

(*Anoplolepis gracilipes*)

- Long slender body – 5mm body length
- Very long legs and antennae
- Brownish-yellow or orange-yellow, with a brown abdomen, sometimes striped
- Looks like a small green ant but yellow
- Erratic, frantic, “crazy” movement
- Able to forage day and night but less active in intense heat and heavy rain

Yellow crazy ants are opportunistic feeders and consume both sugars and proteins (survey teams use a mix of tuna and jam as bait). They don't bite or sting, but spray formic acid to subdue and kill prey, and sometimes as a defensive mechanism when disturbed. This can irritate skin and eyes, blinding pets, livestock and native animals. Few small animals or insects survive in areas they colonise. Chicks and young animals are particularly at risk.

Yellow crazy ants have recently been found in Little Mulgrave National Park, part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. To learn more, watch and share this YouTube video about yellow crazy ants:

<http://youtu.be/GgG-LDTRmkM>

Electric ants

(*Wasmannia auropunctata*)

- Tiny – about 1.5mm in length
- Light / golden brown in colour
- Active 24 hours a day in most weather conditions
- Likes moist areas, especially those close to water
- Tend to move slowly, often in distinct foraging lines
- Inflict a painful sting

Electric ants inject venom when they sting, which can result in painful, itchy pimples that take a long time to clear up, and occasionally triggering severe allergic reactions. They target the eyes and orifices of animals, repeatedly stinging and trying to blind them. They can be a serious nuisance in infected areas, stinging people around the home, the farm, and at tourist sites.

Electric ants frequently colonise people's homes, attracted to food (like peanut butter and hotdogs which are used as bait by survey teams). They have even been known to take a swim in backyard pools, and take over children's playgrounds.



Image courtesy of Qld Govt

Behaviour

Both electric and yellow crazy ants lay their eggs in damp niches, under logs, leaf litter, stones, in boxes, plant pots, furniture and even wall cavities. They also take over the burrows and nesting holes of birds and other animals (e.g. parrots, owls and gliders). They reproduce mainly in the wet season, spreading out from the source colony by 'budding', and form super-colonies with multiple queens. Yellow crazy ants are capable of spreading up to 1km per year and both species spread into new areas through movement of timber, soil, vegetation, pot plants, picnic and camping gear, etc.

Tramp ants 'farm' honeydew (a sugary liquid) by protecting sap-sucking insects (like scale and aphids), which leads to spread of sooty mould. Sooty mould weakens plants, and can lead to dieback of plants and crops (sugar cane, fruit trees, etc). In addition to sugars tramp ants require protein to breed, and in infected areas, few other invertebrates (including native ants, insects, spiders, worms, etc.) or small vertebrates (like frogs and skinks) survive. Both species forage on the ground and high up into the canopy.

Impact on the Wet Tropics

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is a truly exceptional place, which attracts tourists from all over the world who come to experience our spectacular scenery and unique plants and animals. This extraordinary ecosystem is a living museum containing the world's oldest continuous rainforest with over 700 species of plants and nearly 70 vertebrate animals found nowhere else in the world – a real hotspot for biodiversity. For those of us lucky enough to call it home, it also provides a unique sense of place and a stunning backdrop to our daily lives.

Tramp ants are a serious threat to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the surrounding region. Our warm, humid climate is ideal for their spread. Electric and yellow crazy ants could have a devastating impact on our unique plants and animals, including iconic and threatened species like cassowaries and spotted-tailed quolls. The ants' ability to forage high in the canopy means that both ground and tree-dwelling animals are in danger. The region's tourism and agricultural industries could also be adversely affected.

If caught early enough, eradication of tramp ants in urban areas is fairly straightforward, but once they start to invade more remote, rugged natural areas, they will be almost impossible to stop.

Please help us stamp out tramp ants before they destroy the irreplaceable diversity of the Wet Tropics.



Queensland Government



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

