

Authority focuses on rural water supply

Source: WATER AUTHORITY OF FIJI

The Water Authority of Fiji is dedicated to providing safe and quality drinking water to its customers including those in the rural communities.

This year, the authority introduced sand filters to provide safe and quality drinking water to the rural communities in Fiji.

The sand filters are used to improve the quality of water by removing pathogens, dirt and improving the taste of water.

WAF is carrying out this pilot project through the Rural Water Supply Scheme.

The Rural Water Supply Scheme applies to areas outside of the metered urban and peri-urban water reticulation systems.

Currently, there is a total of 2497 Rural Water Supply Schemes nationwide.

WAF Acting general manager production Ilisoni Saladua said the main purpose of the scheme is to improve water supply to the rural areas.

"The scheme applies to those who are not supplied with water from the WAF's water reticulation system," he said.

Mr Saladua said only informal settlements were eligible to apply for the scheme.

"Respective community's can apply for the scheme through the Divisional Heads," he said.

"The Divisional Heads will write a letter requesting the Authority to carry out the rural water supply project in that area."

"WAF conducts all the surveys and sends the report back to the Divisional Heads."

Mr Saladua said 90 per cent of the total cost is borne by the Government while the 10 percent was paid by the communities.

Whilst WAF is carrying out its role as the implementer of the Rural Water Supply Scheme, communities also need to take responsibility in the maintenance of the systems

Mr Saladua said the Authority was there to provide the technical expertise and train members of the community on how to maintain these systems

"For example, it is the communities' responsibility to ensure that the dams are clean at all times," he said.

Mr Saladua said there should be discus-

sions amongst members to have some form of agreed levy.

"The money can be used for maintenance purposes and expansion projects," he said.

He said the water catchment areas also needed to be protected and marked at all times.

"Communities should be aware of the water catchment areas in terms of cattle farming and the spraying of pesticides," he said.

Mr Saladua said communities needed to consider the safety aspects of the water that was supplied.

"They should clean the screens after a heavy rainfall and be vigilant when no water is coming," he said.

Meanwhile, a total of 45 projects have been scheduled to be carried out this year.

Protect Fiji from exotic invasive ants

Source: BIOSECURITY OF FIJI

Ants- we usually ignore them brushing them away as harmless; but they are a real nuisance especially when they get into the kitchen looking for food.

There are over 9000 ant species worldwide with most of them playing important roles in the environment. Amongst other things, they are important for insect control, recycling materials and soil turnover.

Ants are excellent hitchhikers, hitchhiking rides on luggage, cargo or vessels. However, like many other organisms, once they are introduced in new environments their impacts can be far reaching affecting island ecosystems and the livelihoods of people.

Invasive ants have caused significant disruption in the countries they have invaded. They have disturbed the natural environment of these countries, damaged the agricultural crops and caused a decline in the fauna and flora.

If established in Fiji, invasive ants will compete with and prey on Fiji's native insect, bird and reptile and other native fauna and flora, in turn upsetting the natural ecology of the environment. Some ants can also pose a risk to crops, plants and public health. They will also be a nuisance in the home.

Early detection is the key to eradication and control of invasive ants. This article outlines how to recognise and identify some of the most common invasive ant species.



The nest mound built by the Red Imported Fire Ant

areas like lawns, open pastures, fields, electric boxes or on the walls of the buildings.

Impact of RIFA

Fiji relies heavily on its export of fresh produce to overseas markets. These exports can be severely restricted if RIFA is introduced in the country. RIFA can also affect subsistence farming and food security. They can also have a huge impact on native environment as they prey on and compete with native ants and animals such as lizards, frogs, birds and other insects. RIFA also attacks domestic pets and livestock. It poses a significant public health threat because of its venomous painful sting that can cause serious allergic reactions. Countries invaded by RIFA such as United States of America (USA) and China spend billions of dollars annually on damages caused by RIFA. RIFA was found to be established in Queensland, Australia in 2001 and since then Queensland has spent \$AUD 200 million to eradicate the ant.



Yellow Crazy Ant

2. Yellow Crazy Ants (YCA)

Native to West Africa, it is a major environmental and agricultural pest, ranking among the world's worst 100 invasive species. They

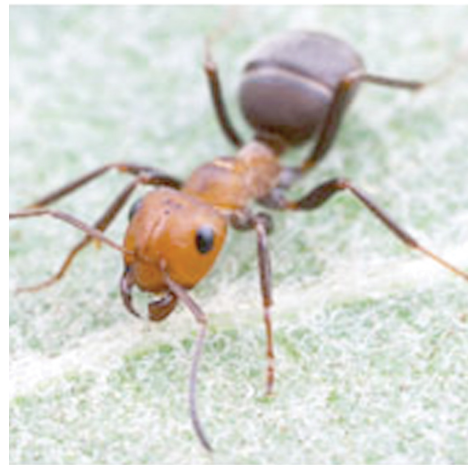
can be found in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Hawaii, Vanuatu and French Polynesia.

YCA are pale yellow in colour with unusually long legs and antennae. Their bodies are 4mm to 5mm long and they walk in a rapid and seemingly erratic manner, especially when disturbed.

YCA mostly nest at the base of trees and plants, resulting in destruction of trees and crops. They can also invade households.

Impact of YCA

They are a threat to many endemic and endangered species in Fiji. It can also have devastating impact on agriculture. In Christmas Island, they devastated the land crabs which have greatly affected the forest ecosystem. They have also caused a decline in native birds, reptile and mammal. YCA are also a household nuisance. There have been reports of incursions of YCA in Kiribati- a major trading partner of Fiji and as such we have a lot of cargo moving to and from Kiribati. If the YCA are present in Kiribati then there is a possibility that they can hitch-hike in the cargo coming from Kiribati to Fiji. This will have a devastating effect on Fiji. BAF has stepped up its monitoring and surveillance and other precautionary measures for all cargo coming in from Kiribati.



Argentine ants

3. Argentine Ants

Argentine ants come from South American. They are ordinary-looking, small brown ants with a slender body of about 2-3mm long. The Argentine ants are uniform in shape and size and move in well defined trails. They have a slight greasy, musty odour when crushed. Argentine ants nest mainly in soils, retaining walls, and rock gardens, under paths or cobble stones, or at the base of plants. They are attracted to areas inhabited by people for food. Argentine ants usually escape by running up the legs and arms when their nests are disturbed.

Impact of Argentine ants

They can have a significant impact on Fiji's horticultural industry and destroy the beehives. They protect aphids which is a bug that is known to destroy crops, eat certain kinds of fruits, chew holes in irrigation pipes and cause contamination to agricultural products for exports. Argentine ants are also a threat to our environment as they can destroy our native birds and insects. These ants are also a health hazard and big nuisance. They spread germs, get in your food, clothes and hair, swarm over babies, play havoc with household electrical

wiring, move into the sink and toilets and kill the pot plants.



Big Headed ants

4. Big Headed Ants (BHA)

BHA vary in size from 2.5 to 4.5 mm in length. They have a large head. They are light reddish brown in colour with head and abdomen having a darker appearance. They nest under stone and in the soil. Slow moving ant compared to some other invasive ants. They build nest in low mounds usually inside the buildings, in pot plants or rubbish bins. BHA has a painful bite when provoked.

Impact

BHA are a major threat to native ecosystems, particularly rainforests. It can also be a major domestic pest.



Little Fire Ants

5. Little fire ants (LFA)

This is a small (about 1.6 mm in length), slow moving, pale orange-brown ant that primarily lives in trees and shrubs. These ants will often sting when in contact with people. It builds nests under leaf litter, rocks or a piece of bark. Little fire ants fall off things easily and are relatively slow in moving.

Impact

It has a painful sting which can cause blisters. In Tahiti - where little fire ants have been established- farmers are unable to harvest crops because of attacks caused by these ants. LFA are also dangerous to humans as they can sting while people are sleeping. Domestic cats and other animals have been known to have been blinded by stings to their eyes.



Red Imported Fire Ants

1. Red Imported Fire Ants (RIFA)

Native to South America, they are a significant biosecurity concern for Fiji. These ants are reddish brown in colour with shiny opaque black abdomen. Their size varies from 3 to 6mm in length. One of the ways to identify RIFA is through their nests. They build mound nests of fine granular soil with the size and height of the mounds varying to about 40cm. These mounds are usually built in sunny, open