



**Help protect and manage
Fiji's unique natural heritage**

PREVENT RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT (RIFA) FROM INVADING FIJI

Background and Description

The Red Imported Fire Ant (*Solenopsis invicta*), or simply RIFA, is one of over 280 species in the widespread genus *Solenopsis*. Although the RIFA is native to South America, it has become a pest in the southern United States of America (USA) and Hawaii, Argentina, Brazil, Cayman Islands, Australia, the Caribbean, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the southern Chinese provinces of Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian, and Macau. The impact of RIFAs are known to be very aggressive hymenopteran insects and gives painful, persistently irritating sting that often leaves a blister (like swelling) on the skin. The multiple painful stings caused by multiple attacks can cause allergic reactions to humans.

Biosecurity Authority of Fiji (BAF) is greatly concerned in protecting Fiji from introduction of RIFA since it has potential to be a serious environmental, social and economic threat to the country. RIFA kills beneficial pollinators, such as ground-nesting bee species including seeds, fruits, leaves, roots, bark, nectar, sap, fungi, are all RIFA food. RIFA are proficient enough at overwhelming intruders to virtually clear an area of invertebrates,

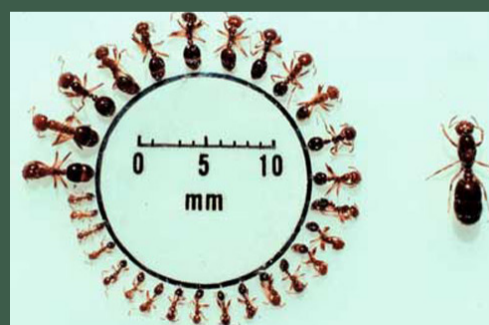
lizards, and ground-dwelling birds. The stinging behaviour of RIFA can be hazardous to field workers as the sting is noxious and produces a pustule (blister) on the skin that can scar if infected. In natural ecosystems they may interfere with and displace native wildlife, young birds in nests and lizards can be vulnerable.

Identifying Characteristics

- Workers are polymorphic (different sizes), small, 1/16- to 1/5-inch long (Small sized 2-6 mm)
- RIFA have reddish body with shiny dark brown gaster with stinger
- Large eyes and 3 teeth on front of head
- Petiole with 2 nodes; no spines on thorax
- 10-segmented antennae with 2-segmented club
- RIFA are very aggressive and will readily swarm and attack anything that disturbs their nest or food sources

Prevention of RIFA to be introduced in Fiji

- RIFA, in adult stages can be transferred by swarming (flying) from carriers to be introduced in a new locality
- RIFA can be easily transported with the imported consignments, therefore used farm equipment and machinery should be washed thoroughly, free from soil particles and contaminants before importing in Fiji
- Vigilant inspection of baggage and containers for in-coming shipments.



Source: http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/urban/ants/red_imported_fire_ant.htm



Source: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/12817/bitten-hand>

Immediately report any sighting of exotic ants to BAF nearest office.

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