

The Little Fire Ant may be small but it has a very long scientific name – *Wasmannia auropunctata*. It is about 1.5 mm with a light to golden brown colour. Its home is Central and South America but it has travelled far to the Pacific islands and now lives in eight of our island countries - French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

This is thought to be the worst invasive ant species, as it can be very harmful to our island biodiversity and ecosystems, economy and our human and animal health.



Where can you find the Little Fire Ant?

The Little Fire Ant prefers the warm, moist and shaded areas found in rainforests and they like to build nest sites under rocks, pot plants and other items in contact with the soil. Little Fire Ants are very sociable and found in big groups. There is often more than one queen per colony and nests are interconnected. Little Fire Ants are known to infest forests, plantations, gardens and homes and can be found inside houses, wall cavities, clothing, bedding and gardens.



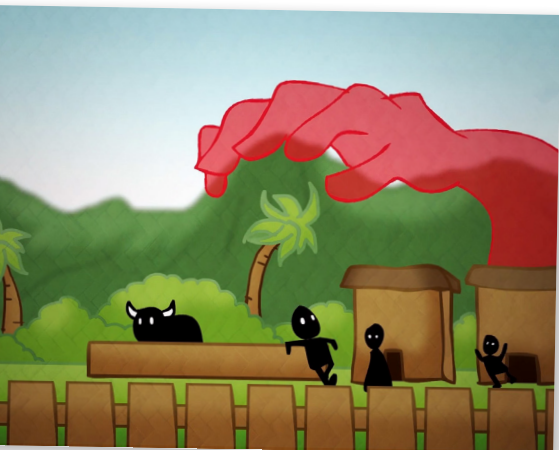
Why is the Little Fire Ant so dangerous?

When the ants are disturbed, they aggressively defend their territory or resources. The sting affects people to varying degrees from a painful rash to large raised welts. It can be so painful that it feels like your skin is on fire, which is why it's called the "Little Fire Ant". If domestic animals are stung in the eye, it can lead to blindness. The sting of the Little Fire Ant can affect people and force them out of their homes and land.

What to do when stung by the Little Fire Ant

If stung by Little Fire Ants apply cold water or an ice-pack to relieve the swelling and pain. Seek medical assistance if the pain is not subsiding or if you have a severe reaction such as excessive swelling and difficulty in breathing.

Contact your Environment Agency and other relevant government personnel immediately to inform them about the Little Fire Ants.



How does the Little Fire Ant spread?

Little Fire Ants spread very slowly on their own, unless they are assisted by people moving infested materials. Cut flowers, pot plants, taros and bananas are favourite items where the Little Fire Ants can be found. Moving any infested items will help spread the ants causing problems for people.

What can we do about the Little Fire Ants?

Here are some of the actions that you can do to help stop the Little Fire Ants.

1. Don't bring risky plant material, fruit or cut flowers into your country or take them to another country without advice from your Quarantine service.
2. Check any plant material such as food crops and flowers for insects or other small animals before giving them to your friends, moving them to a different place on your island or to another island.
3. When travelling to another island check the boat and cargo to make sure there are no animals or insects travelling with you.
4. Clean your house and garden to prevent breeding grounds for invasive species.
5. If you find an ant that you think is a Little Fire Ant or a new pest, contact your Environment Agency immediately and inform them.