

Argentine ant

Formicidae - *Linepithema humile*



What does it look like?

Argentine ants are only 2–3 mm long and are a uniform honey-brown colour. Foraging ants move steadily (not slowly) in defined continuous trails that can often be seen going up trees or shrubs, especially if these are flowering. The ants can't sting but some people react to their bite. They have a slight greasy odour when crushed, as opposed to the strong formic acid smell of some ant species.

Argentine ants are frequently associated with areas of human settlement, but they are not entirely restricted to modified habitats. In New Zealand, Argentine ants have invaded native habitats including scrub, mangroves, coastal forest and the edges of native forest, but forest habitat appears unlikely to be used.

Why is it a problem?

Argentine ants are currently found as far south as Christchurch. They favour sandy coastal soils and volcanic soils but have also been found in other areas, particularly in association with human activity. They are being moved around the country by people (e.g. in potted plants, beehives, soil etc.). They are not currently known to be in Southland.

Nests of Argentine ants have multiple queens and are capable of reaching high densities in a very short time, displacing native insects and becoming a domestic nuisance.

Control methods

Prevention

- Ensure soil potted plants, outdoor equipment or other mediums which could contain ants are ant-free before moving these to other areas.

Controlling Argentine ants is not as simple as controlling most other ant species, and a failed attempt (besides being costly) can also cause bait aversion syndrome or just spread the infestation further. Seeking advice from pest control experts familiar with Argentine ants is advised before DIY control is attempted.

There are a wide range of insecticides and baits available at a number of retail, garden and farm supply stores.

Notify Council

Although this species is not currently known to be a problem, we would like to know if you've come across it in the wild. Please report any sightings to Environment Southland.

[Request info](https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=AnimalPests&Species=587)

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=AnimalPests&Species=587>

[Report this Pest/Weed](https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityIncident/step/1?Subject=PlantPests&Species=587)

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