



Help Stop the Little Fire Ant!

Little fire ants (LFA) are stinging ants that are new to Hawai'i, and they have recently been discovered on Maui and in Kona. The public's help is essential in detecting LFA and controlling infestations to protect the health of families and pets, the agriculture industry and local economy.

Are LFA Harmful?

LFA are serious pests that infest yards and agricultural fields, and they move into houses when their numbers are large. Initially their stings hurt and burn and may cause welts, followed by intense itching that can last for two weeks or more. The ants occur on the ground and on plants and trees, where they easily fall off when the plants are disturbed. Pruning branches, harvesting fruit or picking flowers in an infested area can cause LFA to rain down in large numbers. Some orchard workers in East Hawai'i have quit their jobs because of this. In the Galapagos Islands, workers can't harvest coffee when LFA populations are large. LFA stings could cause an anaphylactic reaction in people allergic to stings.

Pets, livestock and wild animals are also at risk for LFA stings. Pets and outdoor animals in areas with heavy infestations have suffered multiple stings in the eyes, resulting in blindness. Small or newborn animals have died from stings.

LFA are transported to new sites in potted plants, plant materials, green waste and rubbish. LFA are native to Central and South America, but have spread around the Pacific. First reported in Hawai'i in 1999 at Hawaiian Paradise Park in Puna, there are now 50 known infestations in East Hawai'i, one infestation on Kaua'i, and one on Maui.



LFA stings can blind pets

Your Help is Needed!

Everyone is asked to test their property to see if LFA are present. New infestations should be reported to the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) immediately by calling 643-PEST (643-7378), or HDOA in Hilo (16 E. Lanikaula St.) at (808) 989-9289.

Do You Have Little Fire Ants? Find Out Today!

Step 1: Smear a thin coat of peanut butter on one end of some wooden chopsticks (a thick coat isn't better).

Step 2: Place the sticks around your property in the shade, in plants, and at bases of trees. Check the sticks after about an hour.

Step 3: Pick up chopsticks with ants—carefully or they will fall off—and put them in a sealable plastic bag. Several types of ants are attracted to peanut butter, so you must examine the ants and ask yourself these questions:

- Are they red-orange? If they are brown or black in color, they are not LFA.
- Are they no longer than 1/16 inch (the thickness of a penny)? If they are easily visible, more than 1/16 inch, they are not LFA.
- Are they slow-moving and do most of them fall off the chopstick easily when you tap the side of the stick? If they do not easily fall off, they are not LFA.

Step 4: If you can answer YES to ALL of these questions, then you may have LFA. Seal the plastic bag, write your name and phone number on the bag, and place it in the freezer overnight to kill the ants and contact HDOA at the numbers above. Do not transport live ants!



Little fire ants on chopstick

For more information about LFA, visit <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/oc/freepubs/pdf/ip-lfa.pdf>. Online resources for identifying LFA can be found at www.hawaii.edu/ant/docs/ID/WNWKey.html or at www.littlefireants.com.