

Emergency Response

Red imported fire ants

Solenopsis invicta



Plain English Guide – Fire Ants Emergency Order

Current 22nd August 2023

What is a fire ant?

Red imported fire ants, referred to in the Emergency Order as fire ants, are invasive exotic ants that cause serious social, economic, and environmental harm. They are aggressive and have a severe, burning sting. Infestations restrict the use of backyards, parks, playgrounds, beaches and sports fields and damage electrical, irrigation and agricultural equipment. They also reduce crop yields and harm livestock and pets.

What is an Emergency Order?

An Emergency Order declares a biosecurity emergency and establishes measures to respond to that emergency. Fire ants are the biosecurity matter which is subject of this Emergency Order, given the negative effect on the economy, environment and the community that would arise from the introduction, presence and spread of fire ants with NSW.

Why is there an Emergency Order in place?

(cl 7)

Fire ants currently infest around 600,000 ha in South East Queensland and have been found close to the NSW border at Tallebudgera, Mermaid Waters, Carrara, Worongary, and Mudgeeraba. The closeness of the South East Queensland infestation makes fire ants one of the highest biosecurity risks to NSW.

- Fire ants have been found close to the New South Wales border.
- It is important to keep NSW free from this invasive pest.
- Proximity of detection close to the border increases the risk of fire ants spreading into New South Wales
- Movement of fire ant carrier materials could introduce fire ants
- High numbers of nests increases risk of spread.
- Fire ants can harm ecosystems, reduce crop yields, affect health, damage infrastructure, and limit outdoor use.

Where does the Emergency Order apply?

(cl 4)

The Order applies to the whole of NSW as the entire state has been declared an emergency zone.

Who does the Emergency Order apply to?

(cl 9)

The Emergency Order applies to any person who deals with a fire ant carrier and enters NSW from a known infested area.

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What is a “fire ant carrier”?

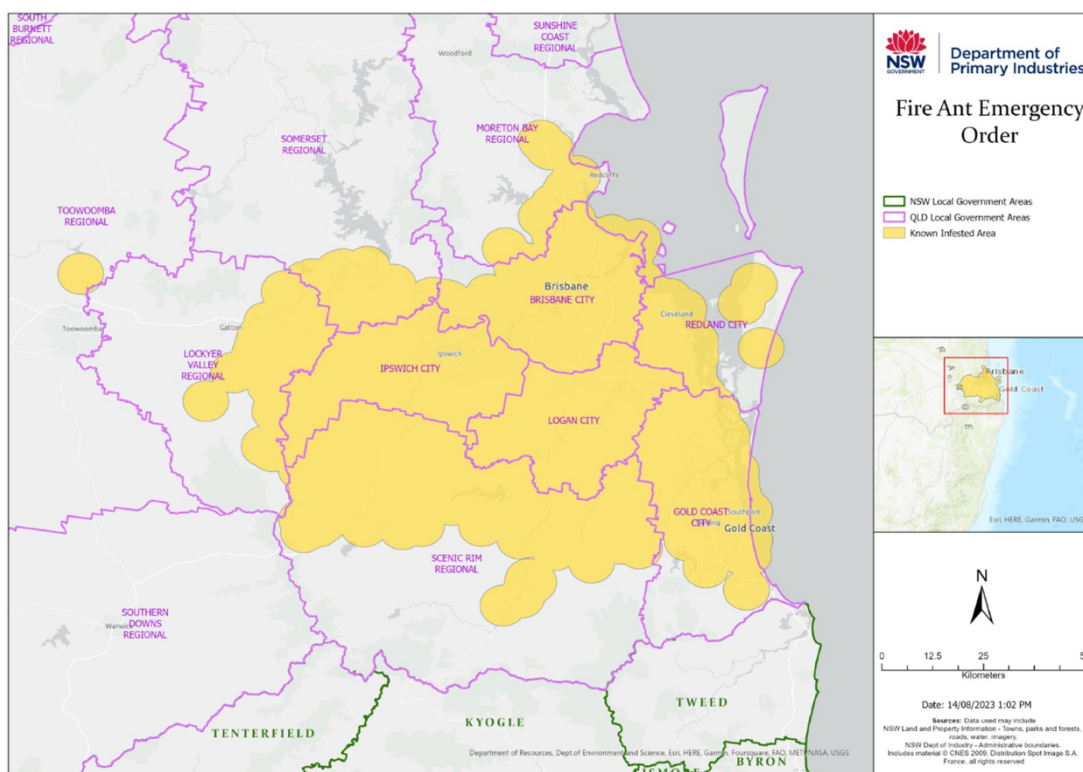
A **fire ant carrier** means any of the following carriers of fire ants:

- a) organic mulch, includes manure, bark, wood chips, hay, straw, silage and sugarcane bagasse but does not include baled material,
- b) soil and anything with soil on it,
- c) baled material, includes baled hay, baled straw, baled sugarcane and baled silage,
- d) potted plants, includes a plant in a container that was grown or re-potted in potting media, and includes the container, the plant, and the potting media. It does not include tissue culture, or seedlings in plugs or cells used to grow or transport plants, with a volume of 0.1 litres or less,
- e) turf,
- f) agriculture or earth moving machinery, and
- g) mining and quarrying materials, includes material that is a product or by-product of mining or quarrying, including chitters, coal fires, coal stone, decomposed granite, sand, gravel, and overburden.

Where is the “known infested area”?

(Sch 1)

The known infested area is in Queensland and is shown in yellow on the map below. This map will be updated if new infestations are found outside the area shown in yellow.



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What if I transit through Queensland to NSW?

You can move a fire ant carrier material through the known infested area of Queensland into NSW only if:

- the fire ant carrier was present in the known infested area for less than 12 hours, and
- you did not stop in the known infested area during transit, except to obtain supplies, ie fuel, or rest, or have a meal, or deal with an emergency, and
- the fire ant carrier was kept in a condition to prevent infestation by fire ants ie kept off the ground to prevent fire ants crawling into or onto the materials and kept covered to prevent fire ants landing on the materials.

Can I transport fire ant carriers from Queensland into NSW?

The Emergency Order permits the movement of certain fire ant carriers from Queensland into NSW under certain **conditions**.

Anything grown, packed or sourced in a known fire ant infested area in Queensland and transported into NSW **must** meet the following treatment and movement conditions:

Conditions		Documentation required
Organic mulch	<p>It must be heat treated so that all parts of the mass have reached a minimum temperature of 65.5 degrees Celsius.</p> <p>It must be <u>handled and stored</u> in a way that prevents infestation by fire ants immediately after treatment and until it arrives in NSW.</p>	<p>The materials must be accompanied by one of the following, that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u>• a <u>Biosecurity Certificate</u> issued in accordance with the entry conditions specified in BioSecure HACCP Entry Conditions Compliance Procedure Number ECCPRIFA21.
Soil	<p>It must be heat treated so that all parts of the mass have reached a minimum temperature of 65.5 degrees Celsius</p> <p>It must be <u>handled and stored</u> in a way that prevents infestation by fire ants immediately after treatment and until it arrives in NSW.</p>	<p>The materials must be accompanied by one of the following, that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u>• a <u>Biosecurity Certificate</u> issued in accordance with the entry conditions specified in BioSecure HACCP Entry Conditions Compliance Procedure Number ECCPRIFA21.

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Conditions		Documentation required
Baled materials	<p>It must be inspected and found to be dry and free of all soil.</p> <p>It must be treated with an APVMA approved chemical for the control of fire ants in accordance with all label directions and permit conditions.</p> <p>It must be <u>handled and stored</u> in a way that prevents infestation by fire ants immediately after treatment and until it arrives in NSW</p>	<p>The materials must be accompanied by a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u> that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer.</p>
Potted plants	<p>Must be treated with an APVMA approved chemical for the control of fire ants in accordance with all label directions and permit conditions</p> <p>The treatment must remain effective until it arrives in NSW.</p>	<p>The materials must be accompanied by one of the following, that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u>• a <u>Plant Health Assurance Certificate</u> that certifies they have been produced and dealt with in accordance with the <u>Interstate Certification Assurance Scheme ICA-39 Treatment of Bulk Growing Media and Potted Plants for Red Imported Fire Ants</u>• a <u>Biosecurity Certificate</u> that certifies they have been produced and dealt with in accordance with BioSecure HACCP Entry Conditions Compliance Procedure Number ECCPRIFA28.

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Conditions		Documentation required
Turf	<p>Turf must be treated with an APVMA approved chemical for the control of fire ants in accordance with all label directions and permit conditions</p> <p>Turf must be harvested in accordance with all label directions and permit conditions for the APVMA approved chemical used to treat the turf.</p> <p>Must be <u>handled and stored</u> in a way that prevents infestation by fire ants immediately after harvesting and until it arrives in NSW.</p>	The materials must be accompanied by a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u> that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer
Used agricultural or earth moving equipment	<p>Requires cleaning, inspection, and certification.</p> <p>Must be inspected and found to be free from fire ants, soil and other materials such as hay, straw, turf or mulch 48 hours prior to dispatch.</p>	The materials must be accompanied by a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u> that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer
Mining or quarrying materials	<p>Must be vigorously disturbed (agitated through crushing, screening, sieving, turning or washing) at least once:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• every 21 days while in the fire ant biosecurity zones, and• in the 24 hours before it is moved from the fire ant biosecurity zones.	The materials must be accompanied by a <u>Plant Health Certificate</u> that must be produced for inspection when requested by an authorised officer

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What can an authorised officer do under this Emergency Order?

Authorised officers are permitted to issue an individual biosecurity direction in the case of an emergency, to direct a person to stop a vehicle and inspect the vehicle and any contents in or on the vehicle, if it is related to the fire ant biosecurity emergency.

How long will the Emergency Order be in place?

The Emergency Order commenced on 16th August 2023 and will expire in six months.

What are “dealings”?

Section 12 of the Biosecurity Act 2015 provides the definition for “dealings”.

Deal with fire ants or a fire ant carrier, or engage in a dealing with fire ants or a fire ant carrier, includes any of the following -

- keep fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- have possession, care, custody or control of fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- produce, manufacture or supply fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- import fire ants or a fire ant carrier into the State,
- acquire fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- buy, sell or dispose of fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- move fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- release fire ants or a fire ant carrier from captivity,
- use or treat fire ants or a fire ant carrier for any purpose,
- breed, propagate, grow, raise, feed or culture fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- experiment with fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- display fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- enter into an agreement or other arrangement under which another person deals with fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- agree to deal with fire ants or a fire ant carrier,
- cause or permit a dealing in fire ants or a fire ant carrier to occur,
- testing for the presence of fire ants.

An occupier of land is taken to have possession of any fire ants or a fire ant carrier on that land unless the occupier establishes that the fire ant or fire ant carrier was in the possession, care, custody or control of another person.

Fire ants are listed as prohibited matter throughout NSW under the Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW). This means that any person who “deals” with fire ants or fire ant carriers is guilty of an offence under that act.