Fire ant biosecurity zone requirements

Starter kit

Fire ants can spread like wildfire.

NEW BIOSECURITY ZONES AND REQUIREMENTS NOW IN PLACE.
daf.qld.gov.au/fireantzones
Fire ants can spread like wildfire—help stop the spread

If you or your business move materials like soil, turf, mulch, hay, potted plants or animal manure there are things you need to know about how you can protect our communities from fire ants.

As a ‘super pest’, fire ants are not only destructive but aggressive, highly-adaptive and well-equipped for survival. They can spread on the ground, by flight, in floodwaters and particularly like to hitch a ride in carrier materials we move every day. These include:

- soil, including fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out
- mulch and animal manure
- baled hay, straw and sugar cane mulch
- potted plants and compost
- turf
- mining and quarry products, and by-products.

This starter kit includes key information to introduce you to fire ant management in South East Queensland and how you can help stop the potential spread of fire ants through the movement of these materials.

Fighting fire ants

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (program) is responsible for managing fire ant eradication in South East Queensland. The program’s 10-year Eradication Plan is using a staged, rolling treatment program from west to east to rid Australia of this invasive pest in partnership with the Queensland community. The program is funded by all Australian states and territories, and the Commonwealth Government.

The Biosecurity Act 2014 (Act) helps manage biosecurity risks, like fire ants, that could seriously impact Queensland’s economy, agricultural and other industries, environment and lifestyle. Under the Act, any suspected fire ants are to be reported to the program within 24 hours. Movement requirements for carrier materials in fire ant ‘biosecurity zones’ also apply to help prevent the spread of fire ants.

Biosecurity zones

On 27 May 2020 amendments were made to the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 to reduce the chance of fire ants spreading via carrier materials and provide extra protection for areas that have already undergone fire ant eradication treatment by the program.

There are two fire ant biosecurity zones in South East Queensland, with suburb areas reflecting where fire ants have been found.

A soil movement guideline has been introduced to provide clarity on how individuals and businesses can satisfy their general biosecurity obligation when working with soil.

Other amendments were to the risk mitigation strategies that need to be followed if working with or disposing of materials that may carry fire ants.

What’s in this starter kit?

- Fire ant biosecurity zone map
- Fire ant biosecurity zone suburbs list
- Biosecurity legislation factsheet
- Managing soil factsheet
- Conducting visual inspections of fire ants fact sheet
- Fire ant management training information

Further information on the management of fire ant carriers can be found at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants. The online Compliance Advice Tool provides a quick and easy guide to find out what the requirements are under the Biosecurity Regulation 2016.

More information

The program conducts free training sessions about the identification of fire ants and high risk material management. Book at ants.daf.qld.gov.au. For more information on fire ants or the program’s ten year plan visit daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or contact the program on 13 25 23 for further information.
Biosecurity legislation and fire ant management

To prevent the spread of one of the world’s most invasive pests, fire ant biosecurity zones have been established under the *Biosecurity Act 2014 (Qld)*.

**Fighting fire ants**

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The program’s 10-year Eradication Plan began in 2017 to commence eradication of the fire ant infestation in South East Queensland. By using a staged, rolling treatment program from west to east, it aims to rid Australia of this invasive pest in partnership with the Queensland community. The program is funded by all Australian states and territories, and the Commonwealth Government.

The *Biosecurity Act 2014* (Act) aims to improve Queensland’s biosecurity preparedness and response capabilities by managing biosecurity risks and the significant impacts animal and plant diseases and pests could have on our economy, agricultural and other industries, environment and lifestyle.

Fire ants are a category 1 restricted matter under the Act. It is a requirement under the Act to report suspect fire ants to the program within 24 hours.

**What’s a biosecurity zone?**

There are two fire ant biosecurity zones established under the Act to help control the movement of materials that may carry fire ants. If you are operating or residing in these zones then you are required to undertake risk mitigation activities to prevent the human-assisted spread of fire ants. Not complying with requirements can result in penalties. Find out more about biosecurity zones at [daf.qld.gov.au/fireants](http://daf.qld.gov.au/fireants).

**Does the legislation apply to everyone?**

Under the Act, all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to manage biosecurity risks and threats that are under their control, they know about or they are expected to know about. There are particular requirements for some commercial operations e.g. turf farming and soil movement activities such as excavation.

**What do I need to do?**

If you are involved in the movement or storage of high risk materials that may carry fire ants, you must:

- follow movement controls relevant to the materials you move
- understand what fire ants look like and what materials they can be moved in
- be aware if you are living or working close to or within a fire ant biosecurity zone
- conduct inspections of material for any fire ant activity prior to moving it
- report suspect ants to the program by calling 13 25 23 or completing the online form at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants
- ensure all staff, contractors and sub-contractors are aware of and following the movement controls
- check that materials coming to your site or property are being moved lawfully. Ask your supplier for a copy of a current biosecurity instrument permit (BIP) or what risk mitigation measures have being undertaken
- clean machinery and equipment used when working with high risk materials, before moving the equipment off site.
- treat for fire ants to reduce the risk of spread.

What are high risk materials?

Materials that are considered ideal habitats for fire ants are considered high risk as they are likely to carry fire ants (i.e. be fire ant carriers). There are restrictions on the storage and movement of these materials within fire ant biosecurity zones. Fire ant carriers include:

- soil, including fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out
- mulch and animal manure
- baled hay or straw
- potted plants
- turf, mining and quarry products, and compost.

What is a biosecurity instrument permit?

You may apply to the program for a permit authorising you or your organisation to perform an activity. You can request a BIP by calling 13 25 23 or online at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants.

Each BIP application is assessed on its own merits and applications may be refused if the movement poses an unacceptable risk of spreading fire ants.

Movement controls

The two biosecurity zones are in place to restrict the movement of materials that could spread fire ants. The Biosecurity Regulation 2016 outlines how high risk materials must be managed, including treatment, storage and movement. The table below outlines some of these requirements. For further information on requirements for specific materials see daf.qld.gov.au/fireants.

If you are unable to comply with these conditions then a BIP must be obtained before moving the material from one location to another. Specific provisions are not provided for all situations and there is flexibility to find better ways of managing risks.

Soil is one of the highest risks for spreading fire ants and as such there are restrictions to soil movement within fire ant biosecurity zones. There is also a Soil Movement Guideline — established under the Act — to specifically manage soil movements.

### Fire ant biosecurity zones movement controls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fire ant carrier</th>
<th>Fire ant biosecurity zone 1</th>
<th>Fire ant biosecurity zone 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soil (includes: fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out).</td>
<td>Soil originating from a place within zone 1 can be moved to a place within zone 1 or zone 2. Measures outlined in the Soil Movement Guideline should be followed. Soil can be moved from its original place in zone 1 directly to a waste facility within either zone 1 or zone 2.</td>
<td>Soil originating from a place within zone 2 can be moved within zone 2 only. Measures outlined in the Soil Movement Guideline should be followed. Movement to a place within zone 1 requires a BIP before movement takes place. Soil can be moved from its original place in zone 2 directly to a waste facility in zone 2. Movement to a waste facility within zone 1 requires a BIP.</td>
</tr>
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All movements of soil to outside of the fire ant biosecurity zones requires a BIP.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baled hay or straw</td>
<td>To move these fire ant carriers from a place within zone 1 or zone 2 you must either:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potted plants</td>
<td>- follow movement and storage procedures as outlined in the Biosecurity Regulation 2016. Easy to follow steps are available online at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turf</td>
<td>- move the material directly to a waste facility, zone restrictions apply:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal manure</td>
<td>- Material originating within zone 1 can be moved to a waste facility within zone 1 or 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulch</td>
<td>- Material originating within zone 2 can be moved to a waste facility within zone 2 only; or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other carriers (includes: mining/quarry products or by-products).</td>
<td>- move the material within 24 hours of it being at the original place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are unable to fulfil the above conditions then you must request a BIP from the program by calling 13 25 23 or online at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants.
Failure to comply with movement controls

National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program inspectors conduct random compliance checks to ensure businesses and individuals comply with the procedures outlined in the Biosecurity Regulation 2016 and/or a BIP when moving or storing high risk material.

Penalties for non-compliance apply under the Biosecurity Act 2014.

What if fire ants are found on my property or work site?

Land owners have a responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of fire ants and are encouraged to treat fire ants on their property.

The program will work closely with you to ensure your treatment of your property is sufficient to contain this highly invasive pest.

A biosecurity order or movement control order may be issued to restrict the movement of fire ant carriers from the site in certain circumstances.

Fire ants are a category one restricted matter under the Biosecurity Act 2014 and all Queenslanders must report suspect fire ants to the program within 24 hours of finding them, or potentially face fines.

More information

The program conducts free training sessions about the identification of the super pest and high risk material management. Book at ants.daf.qld.gov.au

Visit daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or contact the program on 13 25 23 for further information.
Managing soil in a fire ant biosecurity zone

To prevent the spread of one of the world's most invasive pests, risk mitigation controls should be used when managing soil in fire ant biosecurity zones.

Fighting fire ants

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Fire ants are a category 1 restricted matter under the Act. It is a requirement under the Act to report suspect fire ants to the program within 24 hours.

What’s a biosecurity zone?

There are two fire ant biosecurity zones established under the Act to help control the movement of materials that may carry fire ants. If you are operating or residing in these zones then you are required to undertake risk mitigation activities to prevent the human-assisted spread of fire ants. Not complying with requirements can result in penalties. Check out the fire ant biosecurity zones at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants

Soil is considered a high risk material requiring careful management to help prevent the spread of fire ants.

What is soil?

For the purposes of fire ant management, soil includes fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out.

What do I need to do?

The Biosecurity Regulation 2016 (Regulation) and the Soil Movement Guideline, made under the Act, outlines how soil should be managed in fire ant biosecurity zones.

Soil originating from a place within zone 1 can be moved to a place within zone 1 or zone 2.

Soil originating from a place within zone 2 can be moved within zone 2 only.

If you are moving soil within the fire ant biosecurity zones, you should undertake one or more of the following:

- treat soil prior to excavation
- take soil from depth
- disturb soil during or after excavation i.e. vigorously turn, crush, wash or screen
- store soil appropriately.

Treating soil prior to excavation

For business operators, it is recommended that a licensed pest manager should be engaged two weeks prior to the anticipated excavation date to:

- inspect the area to be excavated — if fire ants are found report them
- undertake direct nest injection (DNI) of any fire ant nests, and
- treat the site with an appropriate bait in order to prevent fire ants becoming established in the area to be excavated.
At residential properties, individuals can pre-treat an area that is to be excavated using a household pesticide that is available in a retail store. The products used should be recognised by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) as an appropriate product for treating fire ants.

Insecticides must be used in accordance with the conditions of the APVMA permit, the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and in conjunction with the product’s label. You can search for permits on the APVMA website at portal.apvma.gov.au/permits

Taking soil from depth

A newly established, or young fire ant colony, is often located within the first metre of soil. Removing the top one metre of soil at a site, undertaking the necessary excavation and then replacing the original top one metre of soil may reduce ant activity and the risk of ant movement to another location.

The top one metre of soil should not be mixed with the soil being moved from the site. The top one metre should be retained on site or taken to a waste facility within the fire ant biosecurity zone (restrictions apply, see table below).

This method is not recommended for areas where the soil type is soft, loamy or sandy as fire ant nests can extend further than one metre below the surface in areas with these soil types.

Disturbing

Any untreated soil scheduled to be taken off-site should be disturbed before it is moved to another location.

Disturbance means undertaking one or a combination of the following activities:
- vigorously turning,
- crushing,
- washing or
- screening a soil stockpile.

Storing

If the soil will be stored on the property for more than 24 hours, you should use the following storage options:
- off-ground and covered (e.g. in a shed, under a shade cloth or tarpaulin), or
- on-ground, and covered, either on:
  - concrete or bitumen (no cracks), or
  - a barrier that cannot be penetrated by fire ants (e.g. 200 micron unperforated plastic sheeting), or
  - compacted ground (other than sand) that has been treated with an appropriate chemical product before storage.

Chemical treatment should be applied around the perimeter of the on-ground storage area. This should be done by applying a 30 cm wide strip of insecticide containing 80 g/L bifenthrin. If soil is stored on compacted ground, the whole surface area should also be treated.

It is important to keep the treated area free of material that could form an untreated bridge to the soil.

For an insecticide registered as a horizontal or perimeter barrier for fire ants, refer to Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit PER14317 (expires 31 December 2021).

Stockpiles of soil should be disturbed:
- every 21 days
- 24 hours prior to moving the material to another location.

Moving

Refer to the table below for restrictions on the movement of soil between and outside of the fire ant biosecurity zones.

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All movement of soil to outside of the fire ant biosecurity zones requires a BIP.
Applying for BIPs

You can request a BIP from the program by calling 13 25 23 or via daf.qld.gov.au/fireants.

Each BIP application is assessed on its own merits and applications may be refused if the movement poses an unacceptable risk of spreading fire ants.

Keeping a record

You should keep a written record of the steps you take to ensure the soil is inspected, stored and moved correctly, including chemical treatments applied and/or disturbance activities undertaken. This may include:

- dated, written records of the risk mitigation measures undertaken and the details of where the soil has been taken from/to
- photographs, site plans and surveyor’s records
- receipts and records of treatment applied by a licensed pest manager.

These records should be kept for a minimum of two years.

These records would be requested by program inspectors who conduct random compliance checks to ensure businesses and individuals are complying with fire ant movement controls.

Penalties for not complying with movement controls apply under the Act and other relevant legislation.

More information

The program conducts free training sessions about the identification of the super pest, high risk material management and self-management treatment. Book at ants.daf.qld.gov.au

Visit daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or contact the program on 13 25 23 for further information.
Conducting visual inspections for fire ants

To prevent the spread of one of the world’s most invasive pests, high risk materials in fire ant biosecurity zones must be checked regularly for fire ants.

**Fighting fire ants**

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**What’s a biosecurity zone?**

There are two fire ant biosecurity zones established under the Act to help control the movement of materials that may carry fire ants. If you are operating or residing in these zones then you are required to undertake risk mitigation activities to prevent the human-assisted spread of fire ants. Not complying with requirements can result in penalties. Find out more about biosecurity zones at [daf.qld.gov.au/fireants](http://daf.qld.gov.au/fireants).

**What do I need to do?**

If you are involved in the movement or storage of high risk materials that may carry fire ants, you have a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to:

- follow movement controls relevant to the materials you move
- understand what fire ants look like and what materials they can be moved in
- be aware if you are living or working close or within in a fire ant biosecurity zone
- conduct inspections of material for any fire ant activity prior to moving it
- report suspect ants to the program by calling or completing the online form
- ensure all staff, contractors and sub-contractors are aware of and following the movement controls
- check that materials coming to your site or property are being moved lawfully. Ask your supplier for a copy of a current biosecurity instrument permit (BIP) or what risk mitigation measures have being undertaken
- clean machinery and equipment used when working with high-risk materials, before moving the equipment off site.
- treat for fire ants to reduce the risk of spread.


**What are high risk materials?**

Materials that are considered ideal habitat for fire ants are considered high-risk as they are likely to carry fire ants (i.e. be fire ant carriers). There are restrictions on the storage and movement of these materials within fire ant biosecurity zones. Fire ant carriers include:

- soil, including fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out
- mulch and animal manures
- baled hay, straw and sugar cane mulch
- potted plants
- turf and mining and quarry products and compost.
What to look for

Size and colour
- unlike other ants, red imported fire ants have a variety of sizes in one nest (2–6 mm in size), and
- are coppery-brown in colour, with a darker abdomen.

Nests
- look like mounds of loose dirt
- unlike other ants, nests have no visible entry holes
- may be found under logs, rocks, gardening materials and near water.

Behaviour
- exhibit aggressive behaviour when disturbed
- unlike other ants, they swarm and can use collective intelligence to sting together.

Where to look

Commercial or development sites, check:
- anywhere high risk materials are stored
- machinery and equipment used to move or transport fire ant carriers
- the facilities where machinery and equipment used in fire ant biosecurity zones is stored
- the perimeter of the worksite
- anywhere waste material is stored
- areas around buildings, gardens and lawns.

Residential areas, focus your inspections on:
- lawns
- footpaths
- garden beds
- taps
- utility pits.

Rural areas, be sure to check:
- dams
- edges of cultivated land
- crop land post-harvest
- fence lines
- piles of organic matter.

How to look for ants
- Ensure you wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as boots and gloves.
- Before moving fire ant carriers around or off a site, examine the materials and surrounding area, for fire ants.
- If you find a suspect ant or nest, use a long rod or stick and gently prod the nest, and inspect any ants present. Take care not to overly disturb the nest.

If you think you have found fire ants, leave a minimum of one m² around the nest(s) and report your find to the program on 13 25 23 or via daf.qld.gov.au/fireants

More information

The program conducts free training sessions about the identification of the super pest and high risk material management. Book at ants.daf.qld.gov.au

Visit daf.qld.gov.au/fireants or contact the program on 13 25 23 for further information.
Fire ant training

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program conducts training sessions for businesses and pest managers who work in fire ant biosecurity zones and/or with materials that may carry fire ants.

Fighting fire ants

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Why complete fire ant training?

Under the Act, all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to manage biosecurity risks and threats that are under their control, they know about or they are expected to know about. There are specific requirements for some commercial operations, particularly those who work with materials that may carry and spread fire ants. Carrier materials include:

- soil, including fill, clay, scrapings, and any material removed from the ground at a site where earthworks are being carried out
- mulch and animal manure
- baled hay, straw and sugar cane mulch
- potted plants and compost
- turf
- mining and quarry products, and by-products.

Types of training

General awareness training

The 90-minute general awareness session is designed for businesses, contractors, suppliers, and government bodies that operate within fire ant biosecurity zones and/or work with these high risk materials.

While the training is targeted at industry, residents and members of the community who live in an infested area or are interested to learn more about fire ants are also welcome to take part. By participating in this training you will acquire an awareness of:

- fire ants and their impacts
- how to identify fire ants and their nests
- the importance of the eradication program
- what’s involved in the 10-year Eradication Plan
- where to look for fire ants
- how you can fulfil your GBO
- movement control requirements
- treatment options and bait information, and
- methods to minimise the spread of fire ants.

**Pest management training**

These advanced training sessions are designed to enable pest managers and some contractors to treat fire ant nests. They begin with the general awareness training component and then build on that knowledge to cover industry specific information. This includes:

- how the treatment works
- treatment reporting requirements
- treatment demonstration.

To meet the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) permit 14458 conditions and apply fipronil at a reduced rate, licensed pest managers are required to attend this training.

**Session details**

Fire ant training sessions are available both face-to-face and online.

Each session is limited to a maximum of 40 attendees so bookings are essential.

**Cost:** FREE

Sessions at your place of business or another location can be booked free-of-charge if there are at least 25 to attend the training.

**How do I book?**


**Training at program office**

**Venue:** 145–157 Wayne Goss Drive, Berrinba Qld 4117

**Date:** General awareness training sessions are held fortnightly (Wednesday).

One pest management training session is held per month.

**Time:** 9 am to 10.30 am (or finishing approx.11 am for pest management training). Please arrive by 8.45 am to allow for registration.

Tea, coffee and water provided.

**How do I get there?**

**Public transport**

The 545 Bus Service travels along Browns Plains Road in both directions and has a stop 500 m from the Berrinba venue.

**Parking**

Limited parking is available. It would be greatly appreciated if companies making group bookings could car pool. Where possible, please arrive in smaller vehicles.

Enter the facility after 8 am via Gate 2. Street parking is not available in front of the carvery next door, as this area is reserved for local business patrons. Strictly no vehicle access via Gate 1.

**Access**

Please walk through the outdoor dining area to access building reception, and complete visitor sign in.