



Managing mulch in a fire ant biosecurity zone

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

Fighting fire ants

The National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program (program) is responsible for managing fire ant eradication in Australia.

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. Check out the fire ant biosecurity zones at daf.qld.gov.au/fireants

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

What do I need to do?

The Biosecurity Regulation 2016 (Regulation) outlines how mulch must be managed in fire ant [biosecurity zones](#). Follow the methods outlined in this document unless the mulch:

- is moved directly to a waste facility, subject to the zone restrictions below, or
- has been at the property for less than 24 hours.

Storing

If the mulch will remain on the property for more than 24 hours, you must use the following storage options:

- off-ground and covered, 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 must 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 mulch is stored on compacted ground, the whole surface area must also be treated.

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

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). You can search for permits on the APVMA website at portal.apvma.gov.au/permits



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.

Disturbing during storage

Anyone storing mulch must either comply with the storage requirements above or disturb any stockpiles periodically to prevent fire ants becoming established within the stockpile. This means undertaking an activity to disturb the stockpile:

- every 21 days, and
- 24 hours prior to moving the material to another location.

Activities to 'disturb' a material include any combination of turning, screening, crushing, shredding, chipping or washing.

Moving

You may move mulch within, across and outside [biosecurity zones](#) if you:

- follow movement and storage procedures as outlined in this document, or
- move the material directly to a waste facility, with zone restrictions as follows:
 - material originating within zone 1 can be moved to a waste facility within zone 1 or 2
 - material originating within zone 2 can be moved to a waste facility within zone 2 only, or
- move the material within 24 hours of it being at the original place.

If you are unable to fulfil these requirements then you must request a [biosecurity instrument permit \(BIP\)](#) from the program by calling **13 25 23** or via [daf.qld.gov.au/fireants](#)

Keeping a record

You should keep a written record of the steps you take to ensure the mulch is stored and moved correctly, including chemical treatments applied and/or disturbance activities undertaken. These records should be kept for a minimum of two years.

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.

