

Red imported fire ants detected in Sydney, NSW

Information for GPs and clinicians in NSW - please distribute to all staff in your facility



Key Messages

1. A red imported fire ant nest has been detected and treated in Sydney's inner west.
2. The likelihood of fire ant-related presentations is currently considered low, but GPs should recognise and manage possible stings. Reactions are usually local, although severe allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, can occur.
3. Immediately report suspected or confirmed fire ant stings acquired in NSW to the NSW Biosecurity Helpline on 1800 680 244 or through the [online reporting form](#).

Current situation

- A red imported fire ant nest was detected at the Enfield Intermodal Logistics Centre in Sydney's inner west. The nest has been treated, and surveillance at the site and in the immediate vicinity has identified no other nests to date.
- The NSW Government has initiated a biosecurity response. Eradication of isolated incursions is possible; previous NSW detections at Port Botany and in the Northern Rivers have been successfully treated.
- Given the apparently isolated nature of the incursion, the likelihood of fire ant-related medical presentations is currently considered low. However, clinician awareness remains important so that possible stings are recognised, managed appropriately and promptly reported.
- Red imported fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) are aggressive and may swarm when disturbed. A person may receive tens to hundreds of painful stings within seconds. Each ant can sting repeatedly; being stung only once or twice is unlikely.

Recognise possible fire ant stings

- Consider fire ant stings in a patient who reports multiple simultaneous, intensely painful stings after disturbing ants.
- Ask where the exposure occurred and document the location as precisely as possible.

Manage according to clinical presentation

- **Local reactions:** wash with soap and cool water, apply a cold compress or ice, provide simple analgesia, keep blisters intact and advise the patient to avoid scratching. Consider an antihistamine for minor localised reactions or itching.
- **Large local reactions:** consider topical or oral corticosteroids.
- **Anaphylaxis:** administer intramuscular adrenaline immediately, call an ambulance and arrange transfer to hospital, in accordance with standard anaphylaxis protocols.
- **Additional clinical advice:**
 - Call the Poisons Information Centre on **13 11 26**.
 - See the NSW DPIRD *Information for medical practitioners in NSW* factsheet: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1643630/FireAnts_FACTSHEET_Health-Practitioners.pdf

Report suspected or confirmed stings immediately

- Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, medical practitioners must immediately report suspected or confirmed fire ant stings acquired in NSW to the NSW Biosecurity Helpline on 1800 680 244 or through the online reporting form: <https://forms.bfs.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forms/9247>
- Prompt reporting helps biosecurity authorities investigate the exposure location and identify any further fire ant activity.

Further information

- NSW DPIRD: How do fire ants affect us? <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/dpi/biosecurity/invasive-plants-and-animals/insect-pests/rifa/how-do-fire-ants-affect-us>
- NSW DPIRD Fire Ant Program: Information for medical practitioners in NSW https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1643630/FireAnts_FACTSHEET_Health-Practitioners.pdf
- NSW DPIRD Media Release: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/media-centre/releases/2026/ministerial/red-imported-fire-ants-nest-found-at-sydney-port-intermodal-logistics-site>

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