

# DON'T SPREAD FIRE ANTS



Words and images: National Fire Ant Eradication Program

They may be small but don't be mistaken, fire ants can have devastating consequences. Human-assisted movement is one of the key ways fire ants can spread. When people transport organic and quarry materials from one place to another, the ants can hitch a ride leading to them building nests in new areas.

Because of this, landscapers working in or sourcing materials from within South East Queensland are at high risk of spreading fire ants—directly impacting national efforts to eliminate them.

If you move fire ants, accidentally or otherwise, it puts you, your business and Australia at risk. Not following fire ant-safe practices can result in site closures, financial penalties, criminal charges, increased project costs, workplace health and safety issues, and even affect future tender submissions.

This invasive pest is a huge risk to Australia and if left unchecked, fire ants will impact our environment, economy, human health and outdoor way of life, forever.



## MOVING OR RECEIVING MATERIALS? YOU HAVE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Fire ants like to build their nests in the landscaping materials you use every day soil, hay, mulch, manure, quarry products, turf and potted plants.

If you, your business or your organisation handles these materials, on any scale, and they are sourced from within the **fire ant biosecurity zones**, you must follow the steps outlined in the Biosecurity Regulation 2016.

In simple terms, you must follow specific production, processing, storing and/or treatment requirements before you move materials.

Some of the most common risk mitigation measures being followed by the landscaping industry before moving **potted plants**, **turf** or **quarry materials** include:

- Mechanically disturbing quarry materials every 21 days and at least 24 hours before moving it to a new site
- Applying appropriate chemical treatment to turf or potted plants

Different rules apply for **fill or soil excavated** from the ground.

These rules also apply if you are receiving materials whether you buy them or receive them free-of-charge.

Before you take delivery of any materials you should ask your supplier if they have been produced, processed, stored and/or treated in accordance with Regulation.



## HOW FIRE ANTS CAN AFFECT YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS

Fire ants can have serious financial, reputational and health-related impacts for you, your business and your staff. Whether you knowingly transport fire ants or not, ignoring your legal obligations can spread the pest and result in significant fines or penalties.

Here are some ways fire ants can affect you:

### **Penalty infringement notices, business shutdowns and red flags**

Compliance officers from the program conduct random checks to ensure people are following the **Biosecurity Regulation 2016**.

If you are not following the requirements, you run the risk of being fined and having a biosecurity order placed on your worksite or business operation. This could result in an immediate shutdown and prevents you from doing any work on the site until you change your work practices.

Shutdowns will not only cost you time and reputation. You'll also need to pay all costs associated with changing your work practices and rectifying your mistakes, and there's a chance you could have a 'red flag' placed against your business which could result in lost contracts. You could even end up in court!

### **Reputational damage**

If your business ignores its legal obligation, it can cause damage to your reputation with customers and other key stakeholders that you may never repair. Customers may be less likely to work with your business if they know you have not taken your legal obligations seriously with regard to fire ants.

## Workplace health and safety

Businesses have a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for their employees, and fire ants can make this **extremely difficult**. They are known to swarm and a single attack can involve tens or hundreds of ants stinging simultaneously. In rare cases fire ant stings can also lead to an anaphylactic reaction and even death.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

By taking these simple steps, you can help protect your property and prevent the spread of fire ants into new areas.

Failing to take the necessary precautions before moving materials to a new site can have irreparable impacts on our landscape.

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program's Program Executive Ashley Bacon said human-assisted movement of fire ants needs to stop if we're to win the war against fire ants.

"We know a majority of people in the landscaping industry are either doing or want to do the right thing.

"We have developed a **fire ant compliance tool** to help people understand and comply with the relevant requirements and will be continuing to collaborate with Landscape Queensland Industries Association Inc.

Under the new Fire Ant Response Plan 2023–27, the program will scale up compliance activities in an effort to ensure maximum compliance.

"Our compliance will have a much greater presence on the ground and will aim to ramp up to conducting up to 12,000 audits annually," Mr Bacon said.

"These audits will be in the interest checking that people dealing with organic materials are not intentionally moving materials that could carry fire ants."



## STOPPING THE SPREAD OF FIRE ANTS

There are several ways you can protect South East Queensland from fire ants:

### Fire ant training

The program offers several **online courses** to help you learn more about fire ants, how to manage them and prevent them from spreading. Training is free, available 24/7 and can be done at your own pace.

### Report fire ants and the unsafe movement of materials

We all have a responsibility to stop fire ants from spreading, so if you see something let the program know through the new **fire ant compliance tool** or by calling **13 25 23**. Your report is helping protect Australia from this invasive pest.




**MOVING SOIL?**  
**DON'T SPREAD FIRE ANTS**



NATIONAL  
**Fire Ant Eradication**  
PROGRAM



Queensland  
Government

[fireants.org.au](http://fireants.org.au)

### WORKING TOGETHER IS THE ONLY WAY

The economic, social and health impacts of fire ants can change our country forever. They can destroy crops, damage machinery, and render land, paddocks, parks, playgrounds and backyards unusable. If we don't work together to stop them, fire ants could infest all of Australia—costing billions of dollars each year and having a devastating effect on our Australian lifestyle.

Everyone dealing with materials that can carry this invasive pest must do the right thing—working together is key to eradicating fire ants once and for all.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FIRE ANT BIOSECURITY ZONES AND FIRE ANT-SAFE PRACTICES, PLEASE VISIT [FIREANTS.ORG.AU](http://FIREANTS.ORG.AU)**

# Fire ant training for the Landscaping Industry

This course will help you carefully manage fire ants or materials that can carry fire ants, such as soil, hay, mulch, animal manure, quarry materials, turf and potted plants.

**Who is this for:** Groundskeepers, gardeners and maintenance staff, businesses, contractors, suppliers, landscapers and community groups

**Cost:** Free

**Availability:** Course material is available now, online 24/7  
Time requirement: 30–45 minutes to complete

**Grading:** A certificate will be provided at the end of the training and completion of a short multiple-choice assessment

**Start Course**

# Responsibilities for Landscaping Businesses

Under biosecurity laws, all Queenslanders have a shared responsibility to help eradicate pests such as fire ants. The latest biosecurity regulations allow businesses and individuals to find better ways of managing their risks.

Here are some of the ways you can fulfil your biosecurity obligation.

- Understand what fire ants look like and what materials (i.e. fire ant carriers) they might be moved in
- Be aware if you are living or working in a fire ant biosecurity zone and follow movement controls
- Follow the correct procedures when moving or storing fire ant carriers
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure you do not spread fire ants
- Report suspect nests to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or [HERE](#)

## Important Links

### [Fire ant biosecurity zones - Interactive map](#)

Quarantine area that dictates where the requirements for moving fire ant carriers must be followed in QLD.  
Members can use this link to type the address and determine if they must follow movement controls for fire ants.

### [Planned activities](#)

Programs deliver the Response Plan for fire ant eradication. This map helps to understand the planned activities for treatment and surveillance against that plan. This interactive resource will also give you dot points summarising fire ant biosecurity expectations for Queenslanders based on the typed address.  
You can also use this map to understand what areas are priorities for the National Fire Ant Eradication Program regarding engagement.

### [Online training](#)

[Training for the Landscaping Industry](#)  
[Training for your clients - Residential Training](#)  
[Training for Pest Managers](#)

### [Fire ant compliance tool](#)

Interactive tool to navigate fire ant requirements based on location and type of material. You can also use this tool to report non-compliance.

### [Processed materials video](#)

Quarry materials, mulch, animal manure, and processed soils can spread fire ants if not managed properly. The Biosecurity Regulation 2016 requires specific storage and disturbance procedures for materials within fire ant biosecurity zones. Materials on-site for over 24 hours must be covered and placed on a fire ant-resistant surface or treated ground, with a chemical perimeter treatment using bifenthrin insecticide. Rigorous disturbance of materials every 21 days or within 24 hours before movement is also necessary. Always ask sellers if materials comply with regulations and keep records of actions for at least two years to avoid penalties.

### [How to treat fire ants](#)

Video summarising program advice on how to treat fire ants using granular baits.

### [Landscaping Industry Tools and Resources](#)

A range of tools for commercial landscapers, nurseries, gardeners and homeowners doing work in their yards.  
Soil, turf, potted plants and other gardening materials can carry fire ants. If you are buying or selling these products, make sure they have been stored and transported correctly.

