

# Argentine ants

## *Linepithema humile*

### Description

**Colour:** Argentine ants are light to dull brown in colour.

**Size:** Argentine ant workers are 2 to 3mm long and queens are 4 to 6mm long.

**Odour:** When crushed, Argentine ants give off a musty odour.

**Habits:** Argentine ants travel in distinctive trails up to 25mm wide, on trees, buildings and lawn edges and swarm out of the ground in large numbers when disturbed.

### Origin

Native to South America. First detected in New Zealand in 1990.

### Where are Argentine ants found?

Argentine ants are generally found nesting in soil and sand in gardens, potted plants and compost bins. Colonies may also nest in vehicles, boats and planes.

### How do Argentine ants spread?

Argentine ants may move to new areas when disturbed or to find more food. People may accidentally spread Argentine ants to other areas through infested pot plants, compost, garden waste and soil. Queen ants can wander onto camping gear, freight and vehicles.



### Why are Argentine ants a problem?

Argentine ants are one of the worst nuisance pests in the world, known for swarming over exposed food, getting into screw-top jars and making outdoor activities unpleasant by crawling over people. They drive off other ant species, cause a decline in other insects and can affect tree health by encouraging scale (this poses a risk to our citrus and kiwifruit industries). They have been known to eat fledgling birds and native geckos alive and can dominate nectar, seed and pollen resources.

### Status as a pest animal in the Bay of Plenty

Restricted Pest Animal (refer to the Bay of Plenty Regional Council Regional Pest Management Plan).

Land occupiers are not required to control Argentine ants on their property but are encouraged to do so.

It is an offence under sections 52 and 53 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 to sell, offer for sale, display, release, move or propagate Argentine ants in the Bay of Plenty region.

### How do I get rid of Argentine ants?

It is best to use sprays and baits developed specifically for treating Argentine ants. Common ant sprays and baits are likely to be ineffective or may cause the nests to split and worsen the infestation.

### For advice, or to confirm the identity of Argentine ants, call:

- Bay of Plenty Regional Council on 0800 884 880 or email [info@boprc.govt.nz](mailto:info@boprc.govt.nz)
- Your local Certified Pest Controller

*For more information contact a Bay of Plenty Regional Council Land Management Officer.*

