

How can you make your property less attractive to ants?

Indoors:

- Where ant trails enter your house, use a permethrin spray on surfaces that will not be affected by weather.
- Block any obvious entry points.
- Keep all sugar or protein based food in a sealed container in your fridge. Ensure fridge seals work properly, particularly around the corners.
- Clean surfaces with lemon juice, soapy water, diluted vinegar, eucalyptus or tea tree oil.
- Put pet food bowls in a tray of water.
- Trim trees near your house to reduce ant access.

Outdoors:

- Ensure food scraps or sources of food are disposed of appropriately (i.e. in a compost bin with a lid).
- Fix any leaky taps to reduce moisture.
- Spray affected trees for scale insects and aphids.

What can you do to stop moving them?

- Check potted plants for ants before moving them. Do this is by submerging the plant in water for two minutes. Examine garden soil, bark, and building materials before moving it.
- Always check camping gear before going to a campsite. Many parts of New Zealand are still free of Argentine ants.
- Inspect cars, caravans, campervans, kayaks, boats and trailers particularly if they have been in the same spot for some time.
- Use a repellent on recycling and rubbish bins.
- The majority of Hauraki Gulf Islands are Argentine ant free. Be extra vigilant about checking for Argentine ants when travelling to them. Visit the Treasure island's website at treasureislands.co.nz for more details.



Image credit: Rob Moulder

What is Auckland Council doing to help?

Auckland Council is undertaking treatment at Argentine ant infestation sites on Hauraki Gulf Islands Aotea (Great Barrier) and Kawau. Measures have been put in place to stop the accidental introduction to other Gulf Islands. These measures include a pest-free warrant for commercial operators, bio-security check equipment on island barges and raising public awareness.

Auckland Council supports mainland landowners and residents with advice on controlling infestations of Argentine ants.

Rhys Jones (a Welsh Springer Spaniel) is the world's only Argentine ant sniffing dog, trained specifically to react only to Argentine ant pheromones while ignoring all other smells. Rhys is used as a cost effective and efficient detection tool to support the more expensive conventional surveillance methods such as hand searching, visual searching and pottle methods.

► **Find out more:**
phone 09 301 0101, visit aucklandcouncil.govt.nz or visit treasureislands.co.nz



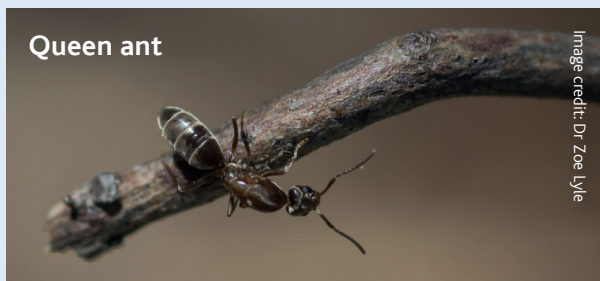
Argentine ant Pest Species



Image credit: Dr Zoe Lyle

Are they invading your backyard?

First discovered in New Zealand in 1990, it is believed Argentine ants reached Auckland by being transported in potted plants, freight or wood. They are now found throughout the region.



Did you know?

- Argentine ants (*Linepithema humile*) are among the 100 most invasive species on earth.
- They threaten native insects, lizards and native birds by attacking them directly, or competing with them for food.
- Unlike other ant species, Argentine ant colonies cooperate with each other and form super colonies over winter. Due to their enormous appetite and numbers they are more aggressive towards other insect populations.
- Argentine ants don't produce a smell when squashed, unlike our native ants.
- Argentine ants farm aphids to produce honeydew, which the ants then eat.

If you suspect you have Argentine ants on your property, collect a sample in a well sealed container, adding your name, address and phone number and contact Auckland Council Bio-security on 09 301 0101.

How do you identify them?

- Argentine ants are 2-3mm long and a pale to dark honey-brown colour.
- They travel steadily in defined continuous trails up to five or six ants (or 2cm) wide.
- The ants are fast moving and walk or swarm over objects rather than moving around them.

Where do they live?

- Argentine ants like warm, dry places and can nest almost anywhere, but are most commonly found on the ground under timber, retaining walls, metal or concrete or in plant pots, boats, caravans and tents.
- Due to their need for protein and their love of honeydew, they are also commonly found on citrus trees or plants with high numbers of aphids.

How can you control them?

- A range of products are available to eradicate pest ants however, New Zealand has unique weather conditions and many products have not been independently assessed for their effectiveness against Argentine ants.
- Using the wrong product can cause queen ants to split from the colony and form new colonies
- The best way to ensure these pests are controlled is by contacting pest control specialist companies such as Fly Busters or Key Industries.
- More information about available products can be found at the following website: argentineants.landcareresearch.co.nz/control_tools.asp

When can you control them?

- The best time to control Argentine ants is when worker activity is at its highest and the ants are active. They are best targeted during the daytime at temperatures above 15°C.
- Treatments are particularly effective on sunny spring days when ants and surfaces are warmed by direct sunshine and the ants are starting to move from their winter aggregation sites.
- If rain is forecast, baiting should be delayed.
- Drought conditions depress foraging activity, so baiting should be avoided during prolonged dry spells.
- Where possible collaborating with neighbours to expand and protect the treatment zones is beneficial as this prevents ants from spreading between properties.
- **Insecticides are poisonous, particularly for fish and other aquatic wildlife. For this reason you should not lay baits in drains, gutters or within 3 metres of waterways.**

