



MEDIA RELEASE

Argentine Ant aerial baiting continues

The Norfolk Island Regional Council Argentine Ant Eradication Program crews will continue to bait Argentine ants from the ground in infested areas over coming weeks using motorised blowers to deliver dry sugar bait.

Blower treatments use a fine-grained solid (sugar) with a small amount of Fipronil that rapidly drops to the ground in the immediate vicinity of where it is dispersed.

The active constituent used within Argentine Ant bait is Fipronil, an insecticide with very little potential activity in vertebrates. It is a standard chemical used widely globally within agriculture, but we are using it at less than 1000th the rate of typical applications.

The recent aerial treatments were delivered using a solid hydrogel - a product that is commonly used by florists. The hydrogels swell and hold water and sugar and a very small amount of Fipronil. The hydrogels drop directly to the ground from the drone, and the Fipronil is “locked up” inside the hydrogel until it is consumed by the ant. The Argentine ants are attracted to the sugar and feed on the bait before taking it back to their nests.

No bait or insecticides are being applied in gas form or as a mist that could be blown off target or inhaled by people or livestock.

All products and methods used by the Argentine Ant Eradication Program are approved by Australia’s chemical authority, the APVMA. A major component of the approval process is that the products and treatments meet health requirements in that they do not pose a risk to people or livestock.

The team are also continuing the search for any remaining ants within the baited zones using both visual searches, baits/lures to attract the ants and Bella the Argentine Ant detector dog.

Monitoring has so far shown that there has been a significant reduction in Argentine Ant numbers within treated areas when compared to areas that have not been treated.

As always, please be careful when transporting firewood, machinery, green waste, plants or any other organic materials across the Island to avoid spreading the ants across the island.

Argentine ants are 2-3mm long and a uniform honey brown colour. The behaviour of Argentine ants is their most distinguishing characteristic – swarming up to the surface once

disturbed and forming strong foraging trails, often found running along fence lines to food sources.

When crushed, Argentine Ants do not have the strong 'ant smell' that is associated with many other ant species.

If you see ants that you think might be Argentine Ants, or if you require more information about Argentine Ants, please make contact with the Argentine Ant Eradication Program Team via Customer Care on local free call 0100.



Jim Castles
SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

10 December 2019