



MEDIA RELEASE

ARGENTINE ANT PROGRAM – AERIAL BAITING PROGRAM UPDATE

The eradication of Argentine Ants is crucial to protect biodiversity, agricultural productivity and the tourism industry on Norfolk Island.

The Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*, is ranked among the worst invasive species globally because of its well known and severe environmental impacts on native flora and fauna, ability to reduce crop productivity, and for being a major household pest.

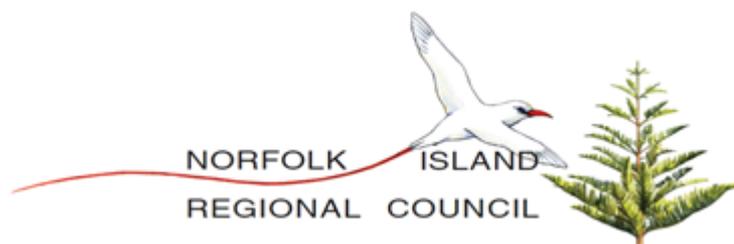
Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC) Argentine Ant Eradication Program staff and contractors are working under the guidance of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) through the Norfolk Island Argentine Ant Eradication Strategy to conduct targeted baiting in Argentine Ant infested areas. The Argentine Ant Eradication Program is funded by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Communications.

Concerns were recently raised by local beekeepers about the potential impacts of recent Argentine ant aerial baiting on the health of some bee hives on Norfolk Island. The aerial baiting program has been on hold across the island whilst testing occurred. Results have now confirmed that bees near the treatment area at Bumboras/Rocky Point were affected during aerial baiting. Sentinel bee hives nearby and elsewhere, monitored by industry and Government, have not seen any decline in bee hive health.

The aerial treatments disperse solid hydrogels - 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.

The active constituent used within the 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. Fipronil is not being delivered as a spray or a mist as part of the Argentine Ant program. All products used and their delivery have federal chemical authority approval.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Argentine Ant Eradication Program, please contact Customer Care on local free call 0100 and an Argentine Ant Eradication program team member will contact you as soon as possible.



Andrew Roach

GENERAL MANAGER

30 October 2020