

What should I do if stung by a Red Imported Fire Ant?

People should avoid coming into contact with Red Imported Fire Ant. If you are stung by it, please take the following measures:

- Wash the wound with soap and water gently;
 - Keep the blisters intact, do not scratch or break the blisters;
 - Apply cold compress to relieve the swelling and pain;
 - Seek medical advice if necessary.
- * If you have history of allergy to insects or allergic reactions are suspected, see the doctor immediately. These allergic reactions may include: rapid onset of flushing or general hives; swelling of the face, eyes or throat; chest pain; nausea; excessive sweating; breathing difficulties; or dizziness.

Enquiries and further information

- 1823 Call Centre : 1823
- GovHK website : www.gov.hk
- Centre for Health Protection website : www.chp.gov.hk
- Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department website : www.afcd.gov.hk

Tackling Red Imported Fire Ant

What is Red Imported Fire Ant?

- Red Imported Fire Ant is a kind of ants and its scientific name is *Solenopsis invicta* Buren.

How do we distinguish Red Imported Fire Ant from other ants?

- Red Imported Fire Ant is a small ant species (about 3-6 mm) which is difficult to distinguish from other ants by the form or other features. However, when Red Imported Fire Ant are disturbed, they will emerge from the mounds and be very aggressive.

Is Red Imported Fire Ant a local species? Where is its origin?

- Red Imported Fire Ant are small ants native to South America. They have dispersed to other parts of the world through commercial activities and shipments of farm produce. They were introduced to southern regions of the USA in the 1920's, Australia in 2001, and Taiwan in 2003. In late 2004, Red Imported Fire Ant were discovered in Guangdong.

What is the impact of Red Imported Fire Ant on us?

- Given their large populations and aggressiveness, Red Imported Fire Ant may have an impact on ecology and the natural environment.
- Red Imported Fire Ant may also give human a fiery sting. The sting can give a painful, itchy and burning sensation. A blister will form at the base of each sting and the wound will usually heal in 10 to 14 days if it is tended properly. On rare occasions, Red Imported Fire Ant stings can cause severe acute allergic reactions which may lead to death. According to current information, instances of severe acute allergic reactions caused by Red Imported Fire Ant stings are rare.



A typical mound of Red Imported Fire Ant

Where do Red Imported Fire Ant build their nest?

- Red Imported Fire Ant usually build their nests in places such as abandoned fields, footpaths of farmlands, dams, kerbs, village roads, lawns, planters, gardens and golf courses.



The environs of Red Imported Fire Ant Mounds



What are the characteristics of the nest of Red Imported Fire Ant?

- The easiest way to identify Red Imported Fire Ant is to trace their mounds. Red Imported Fire Ant will build an earth mound 10 to 45 cm high at the entrance of their nest.

How can we eliminate Red Imported Fire Ant?

- If suspected Red Imported Fire Ant are discovered, a small quantity can be eliminated by domestic pesticides. If it is a large colony, pest control companies should be hired to eradicate the pest. Please apply pesticides in accordance with the amount indicated on the label of the pesticide product and wear appropriate protective clothing. Conduct follow-up inspections at those locations where red imported fire ant mounds have been found before to ensure elimination of the ants.



A close-up of Red Imported Fire Ant