

IMPORTANT PEST ANTS OF AUSTRALIA



Argentine Ant
(*Linepithema humile*)

Key Features

- > The Argentine ant is similar to some Iridomyrmex spp. in body shape and colour, but it has more teeth on the mandibles, a more tear-drop shaped head (the widest point well above the eyes) the eyes are placed relatively lower on the front of the head
- > It has 5-8 large teeth on the mandibles and 5 to 13 smaller denticles
- > Resembles the white-footed house ant but is light brown in colour
- > Lacks a strong smell when crushed

Food preferences

Sugary liquids (hence common habit of tending aphids and bugs on domestic plants).

Size

Approximately 2.5 mm.



Black House Ant
(*Ochetellus glaber*)

Key Features

- > A small, intensely-black ant
- > This ant has a prominent node (petiole) which is a distinguishing feature from the white-footed house ant
- > This ant is slightly smaller and stockier than the white-footed house ant

Food preferences

Sugary liquids (hence common habit of tending aphids and bugs on domestic plants).

Size

Approximately 2.5 mm.



Bulldog Ant (Bull Ant)
(*Myrmecia* spp.)

Key Features

- > One of the largest ants in Australia
- > Red/black in colour
- > Very aggressive
- > Very long straight mandibles
- > Large eyes

Food preferences

Proteins (other insects primarily).

Size

15 – 36 mm.



Carpenter Ant
(*Camponotus* spp.)

Key Features

- > Variable in colour – from black to dark brown to brownish orange
- > Has a smooth, evenly rounded, thorax
- > Large in size
- > Distinct single node on pedicel (petiole)
- > Mandibles have 5-8 teeth
- > Polymorphic (multiple worker size)

Food preferences

Sugary liquids (hence tendency to tend aphids and bugs on plants).

Size

Approximately 3 – 12 mm.



Coastal Brown Ant
(*Pheidole megacephala*)

Key Features

- > Golden brown to brown in colour
- > Two raised nodes on pedicel (rear node more rounded)
- > Polymorphic (major workers with large head)
- > Sting present
- > 12-segmented antennae with 3-segmented club
- > Spines visible on thorax

Food preferences

Fats and oils primarily and proteins as secondary.

Size

1.5 – 2.5 mm.



Ghost Ant
(*Tapinoma melanocephalum*)

Key Features

- > The small size is usually the key to identifying this ant.
- > This ant has 12-segmented antennae with the segments gradually thickening towards the tip
- > Abdominal pedicel consists of one segment which is usually hidden from view dorsally by the gaster
- > Nodel (petiole) is absent
- > Gaster has four segments on its upper surface

Food preferences

Sugary liquids (hence common habit of tending aphids and bugs on domestic plants).

Size

Approximately 1.5 mm.



Golden Tailed Spiny ant
(*Polyrachis ammon*)

Key Features

- > These ants have a black body with a thick covering of fine golden hairs on the mesosoma and gaster (more brilliant on the gaster)
- > A pair of strong horizontal spines are present on the propodeum and a pair of strong spines are present on the petiole

Food preferences

Primarily sugars but will seek proteins and oils.

Size

6 – 8 mm.



Green-Headed Ant
(*Rhytidoponera metallica*)

Key Features

- > These ants have a dark, metallic colouration varying from a green-blue to a green-purple sheen
- > They have a very distinctive square shaped single node on pedicel (with distinct front, top and rear faces)

Food preferences

Primarily proteins and oils. Oil based granular baits work very well against this species.

Size

5 – 6 mm.



Hairy Ant
(*Paratechina longicornis*)

Key Features

- > Hairy ants have extremely long 12-segmented antennae which lack a club
- > Single node on pedicel
- > Legs are unusually long relative to body size
- > There are many long, coarse, scattered hairs over the body

Food preferences

Sugary liquids (hence tendency to tend aphids and bugs on plants) with seasonal variations in summer months towards high-protein diet in favour of sugary foods.

Size

1.2 – 2.5 mm.



Meat Ant
(*Iridomyrmex purpureus*)

Key Features

- > These are large ants with large mandibles
- > Red and black in colour
- > Compound eyes placed relatively high on the head away from the mandibles
- > Single prominent node on pedicel
- > Usually found close to, or connected to, a very distinctive or easily recognisable nest

Food preferences

Proteins and occasionally sugars from natural sources.

Size

13 – 14 mm.



Odorous Garden Ant
(*Iridomyrmex* spp.)

Key Features

- > Black in colour
- > Produces a distinctive odour when crushed
- > Not commonly found indoors
- > Compound eyes placed relatively high on the head away from the mandibles
- > Sometimes confused with the Argentine ants but differs in colour and odour when crushed

Food preferences

Protein sources (primarily insects) but will feed on liquid sugars primarily for moisture component.

Size

4 mm.



Pavement Ant
(*Tetramorium* spp.)

Key Features

- > Brown to black in colour
- > Pale legs
- > Two nodes on pedicel
- > Sting present
- > 12-segmented antennae with 3-segmented club
- > Head has distinctive sculpturing

Food preferences

Proteins and oils and occasionally sugars such as honeydew.

Size

2 – 3 mm.



Pharaoh Ant
(*Monomorium pharaonis*)

Key Features

- > Golden brown to brown in colour
- > 2 nodes on pedicel
- > Antennae are clubbed with 3 enlarged segments
- > No odour when crushed
- > Monomorphic (one size)
- > Multiple Queens in colony
- > A bait only approach is strongly recommended

Food preferences

Primarily protein feeders but will also feed on sugars and to a lesser extent oils and fats.

Size

1.5 – 2mm.



Red Imported Fire Ant
(*Solenopsis invicta*)

Key Features

- > Brown head and reddish brown body
- > Legs, mesosoma and gaster with numerous erect hairs
- > 10-segmented antennae with 2-segmented club
- > Can be confused with smaller species of Monomorium genus but distinguishing difference is the 2-segmented club on antenna
- > 2 nodes on pedicel
- > Mandibles with 4 or 5 teeth
- > Polymorphic workers
- > Can be confused with ginger ant (*Solenopsis geminate*)

Food preferences

Fats and oils primarily.

Size

Variety of sizes, 2-6mm. This is a distinguishing feature of fire ants.



Singapore Ant
(*Monomorium destructor*)

Key Features

- > Light brown in colour with darker gaster
- > Two rounded nodes
- > 12-segmented antennae including 3-segmented club
- > Polymorphic (workers of various sizes)
- > Broad flattened head

Food preferences

Primarily proteins but will feed on oils or fats and sugars to a lesser extent.

Size

2 – 3 mm.



White-footed house ant
(*Technomyrmex albipes*)

Key Features

- > Small, dull, cloudy-black ant
- > Pointed gaster
- > Single node (petiole) which is hidden (compare to black house ant with visible node)
- > 12 antennal segments
- > No antennal club
- > Pale colouration on all tarsi
- > One worker size

Food preferences

Primarily sugary foods (honeydew) and occasionally proteins.

Size

Approximately 3 mm.