



Pacific Pests, Pathogens & Weeds - Mini Fact Sheet Edition

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Argentine ant (365)

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Photo 1. Argentine ants, *Linepithema humile*, feeding on a fipronil gel bait.



Photo 2. Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*, view from the side.



Photo 3. Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*, head from the front.



Photo 4. Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*, view from above.



Photo 5. Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*, showing the arrangement of the hind end. The structure in front of the bulbous 'gaster' is called the 'petiole' (arrowed). It is characteristic for this ant species

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. Australia, New Zealand, not Pacific island countries. Among 100 world's worse invasive species. Difficult to manage; aggressive, but does not sting, bite or spray formic acid. Favours disturbed areas, invades houses.
- Nests on ground, rarely in buildings. Forms supercolonies. Food is mainly nectar and honeydew. Other insects taken to feed queens and brood.
- Damage directly: loss of biodiversity - alters seed dispersal, pollination; indirectly by defending aphids, mealybugs, scales and whiteflies from natural enemies.
- Tramp ant. Spread by 'budding' - queens and workers leave the colony; spread via international trade.
- Biosecurity: requires risk assessments, regulations preventing introduction, protocols in case of breaches, and ability to make rapid

response. Pacific Ant Prevention Plan available (IUCN/SSC Invasive Specialist Group).

- Cultural control: hot water at 47°C kills ants; over 49°C kills plants.
- Chemical control: use i) stomach poisons (fipronil, Amdro borax), ii) growth regulators (methoprene, pyriproxyfen), iii) nerve poisons (bifenthrin, fipronil, imidacloprid). See (<http://piat.org.nz/getting-rid-of-ants>).

Common Name

Argentine ant, sweet ant (in Argentina).

Scientific Name

Linepithema humile; previously, *Iridomyrmex humilis*.

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Information from CABI *Linepithema humile* (Argentine ant) (2018) Crop Protection Compendium. (www.cabi.org/cpc); and Pacific Invasive Ant Toolkit. (<http://piat.org.nz/problem-ants/worst-5-identification/argentine-ant>); and AntWiki. http://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Linepithema_humile; and AntWeb. (<https://www.antweb.org/description.do?genus=linepithema&name=humile&rank=species>); and from *Linepithema humile* (2018) Global Invasive Species Database. (<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/speciesname/Linepithema+humile>). Photo 1 Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org. Photos 2-5 Simon Hinkley & Ken Walker (2006) Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*). Museum of Victoria. PaDIL - (<http://www.padil.gov.au>).

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