

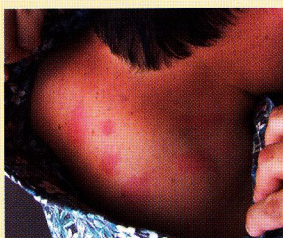
## What is the little fire ant?

**L**ittle fire ants (LFA) are stinging ants that are new to Hawai'i, and spreading. They are transported to new sites in potted plants and on other plant materials or rubbish. They can be serious nuisances when they infest houselots or agricultural fields, and they will move into houses when their numbers are large.

These tiny ants tend to get under your clothes and can get in your eyes. Initially their sting hurts and burns strongly. It usually causes intense itching that can last for two weeks or more.

LFA stings are also known to harm animals, including pets and livestock; multiple stings in the eyes can cause blindness in pets or even the death of newly born small animals. While no serious injuries to people from LFA stings have been reported, those who might have an anaphylactic allergic reaction (particularly if they are very young or old, or in poor health) could suffer serious harm.

The ants climb up into plants of all sizes, including trees. They drop off easily when the plants are disturbed, and they can rain down on you in large numbers when you are pruning branches, harvesting fruit, or picking flowers. Some orchard workers in East Hawai'i have quit their jobs because of this.



**LFA easily fall from trees and get under clothes**



**Pet with clouded corneas**

In the Galapagos Islands, when LFA populations are large, workers are prevented from harvesting coffee.

A heavy infestation can make a property difficult to use commercially or enjoy recreationally. Casual dress is best avoided where LFA have taken hold—gloves, boots, and full-body covering are needed in severely infested areas, where any contact with foliage, including sitting on lawns, can invite a sting. An LFA infestation is a “disclosure issue” in property sales.



**Carefully inspect plants before transporting them**

The little fire ant is native to Central and South America, but it has spread around the Pacific. It was first noticed in Hawai'i in 1999 at Hawaiian Paradise Park in Puna. Although

the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture worked to contain the initial infestations, the ant had already been spread, inadvertently, from infested plant nurseries.

Currently there are about 50 known LFA infestations in East Hawai'i, one on Kaua'i, and probably many more on Hawai'i that have yet to be discovered and reported. The Kaua'i LFA population appears to have been eradicated, but monitoring continues. On Hawai'i, limited agency resources and personnel, the few registered pesticide options, and continuing spread of the ants on infested plant material make it virtually impossible to have a wide-scale government program sufficient to eradicate this pest. People who own or live on the lands that LFA have infested must be willing to put serious, sustained effort into controlling them.