

Detecting the little fire ant

Step 1: Smear a *thin* coat of peanut butter on one end of some wooden chopsticks or popsicle sticks (a thick coat isn't better).

Step 2: Place the sticks around your property, preferably in the shade, in plants, and at bases of trees. Check the sticks after about an hour.

Step 3: Pick up chopsticks with ants—carefully or they will fall off—and put them in a sealable plastic bag. Examine the ants on the peanut butter.

- Are they red-orange?
- Are they no longer than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch (the thickness of a penny)?
- Are they slow-moving and do they fall off the chopstick easily when you tap the side of the stick?



Step 4: If you can answer YES to these questions, then you may have the little fire ant. Seal the plastic bag, write your name and phone number on the bag, and place it in the freezer overnight to kill the ants.

Please *do not* transport live ants.

Drop off the bag at the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) office in Captain Cook (next to the police station) or Hilo (16 E. Lanikaula St.) for identification.

If you live in West Hawai'i and HDOA confirms that the ants are little fire ants, an appointment will be made with you to assess the infestation. At that time, HDOA staff will tell you how you can help stop the spread of this harmful pest.



Caution: Do not treat the ants with a pesticide until the population has been reported and mapped, or the extent of the infestation will not be known.



Controlling the little fire ant

It is very important that you seek expert advice if you believe you have an LFA infestation. HDOA or PCSU field staff should be called to confirm it, record it, and advise you on how to deal with it.

Little fire ants are relatively easy to suppress in small areas but can be very difficult to eradicate completely. Mapping the infestation in your yard (or neighborhood) should be done before any pesticide is applied, or the extent of the infestation will not be known, and it will be harder to contain or eradicate it. Inform your neighbors once you have confirmed that LFA is present, and work cooperatively with them to combat the infestation.

Products like Siege[®] Pro and Ardro[®] Pro (hydramethylnon) have been used successfully to control LFA infestations. Both products are granular baits that can be purchased at most hardware and garden stores. Foraging worker ants are attracted to the bait and carry it back to the nest, feeding it to other ants and the queen. Colonies can be killed in less than two weeks, but eradicating entire infestations requires consistent applications of bait. Select a product and read the label directions carefully before you purchase it. Never use any pesticide in a way not specified in the label directions.