



HAVE YOU SEEN ANY CRAZY ANTS?



Figure 1: Crazy Ant. Actual sized: 2.3 to 3mm



Figure 2: Common ant. Actual sized: 3 to 3.5mm

These photos compare the crazy ant with a common New Zealand ant. Although very similar to look at, notice the long antennae of the crazy ant and the smaller body length of 2.3 to 3mm (Figure 1), compared to the more common New Zealand ant which has shorter antennae and is slightly larger in body length from 3 to 3.5mm (Figure 2).

Background

Crazy Ants were first found at the Ports of Auckland in April 2002. Since then, isolated infestations of crazy ants have been found at various locations throughout New Zealand including Mount Maunganui, the Port of Wellington and the Port of Napier

Origin

Of Asian or African origin, the crazy ant has been distributed widely around the world largely assisted by human activities. Crazy ants are now common in parts of Australia, the United States, Japan and the Pacific Islands.

Description

Crazy ants are black and range in size from 2.3 to 3mm (Figure 1). While they do have a thinner body, longer legs and longer antennae than most ants, they can be easily confused with other ants established in New Zealand (Figure 2). What makes crazy ants distinctive is their erratic, rapid movements especially when disturbed. They do not always follow distinctive trails as other ants do.

Threat to New Zealand

Crazy ants have wide ranging feeding habits including live and dead insects, seeds, honeydew, fruit, and many household foods. In New Zealand they could compete with some of our native ant species. Like many other species of ants they protect aphids, mealy bugs and scale insects which in turn can cause problems for horticulturalists. Crazy ants do not pose a significant human health risk, but can be a serious household nuisance.

Do these ants sting or are they aggressive?

No, crazy ants do not sting but, as with many ants, they may bite if provoked. If disturbed, the ants do begin to move in an erratic manner, weaving around very rapidly. This is why they are called "crazy ants".

If these ants come from more tropical climates will they survive the winter here?

To ensure their survival crazy ants are likely to look for warm places to build their nests. They can establish nests inside buildings, around tearooms or kitchens, in walls, beneath carpets, and other suitable spaces in and around your property including rubbish bins and heating pipes.

THE THREAT

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If you find what you believe to be crazy ants, do not disturb the nest
Contact Biosecurity New Zealand on: 0800 80 99 66