

Deadly fire ants spreading across Australia

22nd January 2024



Australia's unique ecosystems are under threat from an invasive and deadly species – the red fire ant. The tiny ant is native to South America, but has spread across the globe over the past century. It is one of the world's most invasive creatures. It causes

extensive damage to crops and agricultural land. It also kills large numbers of indigenous insects and other animals, including livestock. The ant's painful and venomous sting can cause severe allergic reactions in humans. It can also cause fatal anaphylactic shock. A spokeswoman for the Minister for Agriculture called the fire ants "a terrible invasive super-pest, which cause serious social, economic and environmental harm".

Red fire ants were first detected in Australia in 2001. They have largely been contained within the state of Queensland since then. However, Australia's Invasive Species Council (ISC) says the ants are spreading across the country on flood waters. They are clinging to each other in their tens of thousands to form "rafts" on the storm water. An ISC statement said: "Fire ants are more active before or after rainfall and can form large floating rafts, which move with water currents to establish footholds in new areas." It added: "Our teams are focused on limiting further spread." The ISC warned that the fire ants will reach "every corner of Australia" if the current outbreak is not kept in check.

Sources: bbc.com / cnn.com / smh.com.au

Writing

Governments should relocate invasive species to their countries of origin. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

unique / ecosystems / under threat / invasive / deadly / species / venomous / shock / ants / floods / rafts / rainfall / water / active / footholds / spread / corner / outbreak

True / False

- 1) Australia's ecosystems could kill a deadly invasive species. T / F
- 2) The red fire ant originally comes from South America. T / F
- 3) The red fire ants can kill farm animals. T / F
- 4) The red fire ants can kill humans. T / F
- 5) Red fire ants arrived in Australia earlier this century. T / F
- 6) The ants group make rafts out of grass to float in flood waters. T / F
- 7) Fire ants are more active before rainfall than after it. T / F
- 8) It's possible fire ants could get to every corner of Australia. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1. unique | a. holding on to |
| 2. deadly | b. acute |
| 3. indigenous | c. create |
| 4. severe | d. lethal |
| 5. detected | e. curbed |
| 6. clinging | f. discovered |
| 7. establish | g. distinctive |
| 8. limiting | h. get to |
| 9. reach | i. restricting |
| 10. kept in check | j. native |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How useful are ants?
- c) What do you think of the name 'fire ant'?
- d) What would you do if there were fire ants in your house?
- e) How will the spread of invasive species change the world?
- f) What do you know about Australian animals?
- g) What is the world's biggest pest?
- h) What questions would you like to ask a fire ant expert?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Australia's unique ecosystems are under | a. sting |
| 2. invasive and | b. pest |
| 3. The ant's painful and venomous | c. currents |
| 4. It can also cause fatal anaphylactic | d. deadly species |
| 5. a terrible invasive super- | e. tens of thousands |
| 6. spreading across the country on | f. in check |
| 7. clinging to each other in their | g. threat |
| 8. move with water | h. flood waters |
| 9. establish footholds | i. shock |
| 10. if the current outbreak is not kept | j. in new areas |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of fire ants?
- What invasive species are there in your country?
- What damage do invasive species do?
- What can we learn from ants?
- How can we stop invasive species from spreading?
- What do you know about anaphylactic shock?
- What experiences do you have with pests?
- What economic harm do pests do?

Spelling

- Australia's uneiuq ecosystems are under threat
- one of the world's most nsaievmi creatures
- large numbers of duinnesgio insects
- other animals, including ovletsckic
- The ant's painful and unovsoem sting
- fatal patyhccalnia shock
- first dedteetc in Australia
- ldoof waters
- form large floating srfat
- water rnetcsru
- establish otldoofsh in new areas
- the current eboarukt

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. b	5. f
6. a	7. c	8. i	9. h	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Cockroaches

You think cockroaches are the biggest pests. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their pests aren't as much of a nuisance. Also, tell the others which is the least troublesome of these (and why): bed bugs, rats or mosquitos.

Role B – Bed Bugs

You think bed bugs are the biggest pests. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their pests aren't as much of a nuisance. Also, tell the others which is the least troublesome of these (and why): cockroaches, rats or mosquitos.

Role C – Rats

You think rats are the biggest pests. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their pests aren't as much of a nuisance. Also, tell the others which is the least troublesome of these (and why): bed bugs, cockroaches or mosquitos.

Role D – Mosquitos

You think mosquitos are the biggest pests. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their pests aren't as much of a nuisance. Also, tell the others which is the least troublesome of these (and why): bed bugs, rats or cockroaches.

Speaking – Pests

Rank these with your partner. Put the biggest pests at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|---------|
| • Cockroaches | • Flies |
| • Aphids | • Slugs |
| • Bed bugs | • Ants |
| • Mosquitos | • Rats |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	T	4	T	5	T	6	F	7	F	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.