



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

MEDIA RELEASE

****Note: Vision of the operation and news grabs available on Hightail [here](#)****

****Note: Pictures attached, caption below****

Monday 8 December 2014

RED FIRE ANT ERADICATION EFFORTS CONTINUING

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has this morning visited the Local Control Centre, which is coordinating the eradication of highly aggressive and invasive red imported fire ants at Port Botany.

Ms Hodgkinson said more than 25 staff from the NSW Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services, Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Queensland Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry are working at the Local Control Centre.

“These staff – including surveillance and planning staff, entomologists and biosecurity officials – are working hard to coordinate the eradication response to this highly serious incursion,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“The Local Control Centre is being supported by a team of emergency management, biosecurity and plant and pest insect specialists at a State Coordination Centre at the DPI head office in Orange.

“While this outbreak – the first in NSW – is serious, we have an experienced team of highly trained staff working to ensure eradication is successful.

“Red imported fire ants are a nasty pest; able to inflict painful stings on people, pets and livestock, and eradication efforts in Queensland have already cost \$281 million since 2001.

“DNA testing has confirmed that the ants originated in Argentina and further investigations into how the pest travelled to NSW are being conducted.

“On Friday elite odour detection dogs from Queensland commenced surveillance work, and have since identified male and female winged ants at the original site.

“Entomologists are continuing to conduct surveillance onsite and in the surrounding area to ensure the ants haven’t spread and while a further nest was detected late last week, no additional sites have been identified.”

Ms Hodgkinson said control of identified nests is advanced, with soil injection treatment continuing at the weekend.

“This response is a demonstration of the successful biosecurity partnership between the NSW Government, the Commonwealth and States and territories,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Important information:

- Eradication efforts are being informed by protocols adopted under the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program.
- Red imported fire ants can inflict painful stings on people, pets and livestock and pose a significant social, economic and environmental threat through attacking animals and invading food and water sources.
- The fire ants are reddish-brown in colour, from 2 to 6 mm in length, and may be confused with the common coastal brown ant but can be distinguished by its aggressive behaviour.
- Any suspected sighting of the ants are reported to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.
- People can send photos of suspected ants to biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Caption:

- NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, met with controller Liz Yeatman, NSW Department of Primary Industries, and surveillance officers Elizabeth O'Grady and Stefanie McCowen, Hunter Local Land Services, at the Local Control Centre in Rosebery this morning.