



# The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

## Minister for Primary Industries

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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

**\*\*Note: Picture, caption and important information also attached\*\***

Friday 5 December 2014

### ERADICATION OF RED IMPORTED FIRE ANT UNDERWAY

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, has confirmed response efforts at Port Botany have commenced following a detection of highly aggressive and invasive red imported fire ants at a port facility.

Ms Hodgkinson said three elite odour detection dogs – Willow, Mikey and Olivia – have been brought down from Queensland to assist with eradication efforts.

“Baiting of the exotic pest is now well underway on the quarantined site and will be followed by pesticide treatment in coming days,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“A team of emergency response experts, including regulatory officers, biosecurity officers, and entomologists are at the site looking for nests, setting traps and commencing eradication.

“The National Fire Ant Program is assisting the NSW response and has also provided three of their elite odour detection dogs from Queensland that have been trained specifically to sniff out the red imported fire ant.

“Genetic testing undertaken by Queensland DAFF has confirmed the ant is indeed the red imported fire ant, and is not related to any of the incursions in Queensland.

“Red imported fire ant has not been detected previously in NSW and investigations are underway to determine the origin and how long the ants may have been here.”

Ms Hodgkinson said the detection site has been quarantined and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is working closely with port operators, who are cooperating fully with authorities.

“While the detection currently appears to be localised to the area, we are conducting extensive surveillance in a much larger area to make sure the pests haven’t spread,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“We’ve engaged an expert team from the National Program in Queensland, who are currently dealing with this pest in Yarwun (Gladstone) and in South-East Queensland.”

**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](mailto:biosecurity@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

**Caption:**

- NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, meets “Willow” the elite odour detection dog and her senior handler from Biosecurity Queensland, Justin Gibson, at the Port Botany site yesterday.