

Fuel for Thought

Firing Up Against A Dangerous Foe

For the past few months QER has been kept busy taking part in a Yarwun-based program to remove an unwelcome visitor to our shores, and we're now well on the road to success.



Bruce Andersen
Site Superintendent,
QER

The unwelcome visitor in question is the fire ant, a small but very nasty pest which represents a serious social, economic and environmental threat.

Fire ants are very aggressive, and can inflict a painful wound. In some cases they have been known to cause death as a result of anaphylactic shock.

They are very adaptable to a range of environments, and are considered to be among the top ten pests in the world.

Colonies of the ants were first detected in the Brisbane area back in 2001, and this latest infestation in the Yarwun area is believed to have arrived with equipment packaging shipped from the USA.

Biosecurity Queensland has been on the job since the ants were discovered, starting up a program and declaring a restricted zone in the Yarwun area which extends to include QER's site and parts of Curtis Island, where the LNG plants are being constructed.

QER has very actively taken part in the program, developing and having approved a Management and Monitoring Procedure which resulted in the discovery of some nests on our site. Essentially this meant we were required to conduct surveillance, train staff, seek approval for any restricted items to be removed from site, and conduct vehicle and machinery cleaning. For instance, the shale rock we took to Ecofest as part of a guessing competition had to be thoroughly examined and approved for release.

Identifying fire ant nests has been challenging, as there are no obvious entry or exit holes and they can be found in loose soil as well as under logs and rocks.

However, our involvement in Biosecurity Queensland's program is paying off as we have recently been commended in their latest audit for our level of compliance. But the job is not finished by any stretch, and we'll be continuing to work with the program until we are all absolutely certain this nasty pest has been eradicated.



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