

Pest Profile



Photo credit: April Nobile, California Academy of Sciences
(Specimen CASENT0010644; from <https://www.antweb.org>)

Common Name: European fire ant (red ant)

Scientific Name: *Myrmica rubra*

Order and Family: Order Hymenoptera; Family Formicidae

Size and Appearance:

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg		
Larva/Nymph		
Adult	Workers range from 3.5 – 5 mm Queens are 5.5 – 7 mm Males are 4.5 – 5.5 mm	The workers are monomorphic with 12-segmented antennae, a pair of dorsal spines, a two-part waist, and a stinger. They are yellowish to reddish brown in color. Queens are similar to workers. Males are darker with lighter appendages.
Pupa (if applicable)		

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Chewing

Host(s): The European fire ant is omnivorous, eating a variety of small invertebrates and floral nectaries, but also obtaining honeydew from hemipteran plant pests.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults):

The European fire ant is an invasive species in temperate areas. These ants nest in a variety of areas in natural areas as well as lawns and gardens. The presence of the European fire ant reduces the presence of other native fauna, especially native ants and at the same time increases the presence of hemipteran plant pests. Thus, the European fire ant greatly reduces biodiversity of ecosystems. Conversely, the European fire ant is considered important for ecosystem health in its native range in Europe.

The European fire ant is aggressive and delivers a painful sting that causes redness and swelling and may lead to allergic reactions. Because the ants are rather cryptic, when they occur in high densities, it is likely that people, pets, and livestock will get stung. Thus, the ant has a pest status in preventing the enjoyment of the outdoors, especially lawns, gardens, and parks.

The European fire ant is found throughout Europe but has been introduced into North America. This species is found in the USA in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, and Washington, D.C.

References:

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