

Argentine Ant Eradication Program Update

Norfolk Island Regional Council (NIRC) Argentine Ant Eradication Program (AAEP) staff and contractors work under the guidance of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to conduct targeted baiting in Argentine Ant infested areas.

The AAEP is funded through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC).

As part of the Norfolk Island AAEP), NIRC staff and contractors are currently undertaking ground baiting in Zone 9 (refer to map below). This work commenced in late October and is approximately halfway through completion of one full treatment.

Aerial treatments for Argentine Ants in Zone 9 have been completed over an area of approximately 40 ha by Greg Quinn, the Yamaha Fazer drone pilot. The total area of this zone has increased dramatically since it was last mapped in 2020, making it by far the largest and most difficult zone that we have managed to treat in one year.

Ant counts have also been conducted showing, to date, good signs of success.



Figure 1. Extent and location of known Argentine Ant infestations on Norfolk Island as of January 2022. Green areas indicate zones that have undergone treatment in the past and are now undergoing post-treatment assessments. Yellow zones have recently been treated or undergoing treatments. Red zones indicate areas where ants remain untreated.

In November the AAEP team found Argentine Ants in what was first thought to be a new infestation in the Burnt Pine area, but once mapped it was found to be more likely an expansion of Zone 10 that had extended across the road. This area has since been treated and post-treatment assessments have been conducted with good results.

Our detector dog Bella has been part of the program since 2018. She has assisted the program with her ability to cover large areas assessing for ants in zones that have been treated.

However, over the last few months, despite her handler trying several difficult training methods, Bella was seemingly unenthusiastic about the work. Eventually, it was identified that Bella was probably older than thought, and she has recently retired. Plans are underway to have a new dog trained for the program

I would like to thank Bella's handlers for all the time and dedication that they have put into Bella and the program over the past number of years.



Figure 2 . Bella, recently retired Detector Dog

The community is reminded to be aware of accidentally transporting ants from one place to another. If you live or work in an infested area, please do not move green waste, timber, soil, plants, cuttings, fruit and vegetables, car wrecks, and machinery, even if the area has been treated.

If you think you have found Argentine Ants or have any questions, please contact Customer Care on 22244, who will put you in contact with the Argentine Ant Eradication Program staff.

Community support of the program and its methods are critical for eradication to be achieved and we thank you for your cooperation.

Tara Patel
SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER

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