



Alert

ISSN 1019-6226



No. 18

21 April 99

INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRE ANT *WASMANNIA AUROPUNCTATA* INTO VANUATU

The introduction of *Wasmannia auropunctata* was reported to Vanuatu Quarantine & Inspection Service (VQIS) in December 1998. A delimiting survey indicates that the ant occurs in an area of about 10 km² on the islands of Vanua Lava, Mota and Gaua. The ant may have been present in Vanua Lava since 1994.

The ants usually occur in large numbers and have a bite that is painful to humans.

W. auropunctata is also a plant pest when associated with honeydew producing Homopterans, by injuring plants and providing entry points for fungi and by eliminating predators and parasitoids while foraging on leaves.

Worker ants are 1-1.5 mm in length. The colour of an ant trail is dark grey, although under a lens the red body of the workers becomes evident. Nests are found in tree trunks, under leaf bases of palms, under flat pieces of wood or stones and decaying debris. Colony networks may spread by 500 meters per year.

The ant may be dispersed over long distances in and on transported materials,

Vanua Lava exports copra to Santo

The Vanuatu Quarantine and Inspection Service has the following phytosanitary measures in place:

- Inspection and spraying of all aircraft from Sola airport on Vanua Lava; -
- Inspection of all sea vessels from all ports from the area of infestation;
- As a phytosanitary regulation, the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and Fisheries has signed an Order that bans all agricultural export from the area of infestation until further notification.

For more information on containment and quarantine measures contact:
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