

## What are European Fire Ants (EFAs)?

European fire ants (*Myrmica rubra*), are small reddish brown ants that originated in Europe and Asia. European fire ant characteristics include:

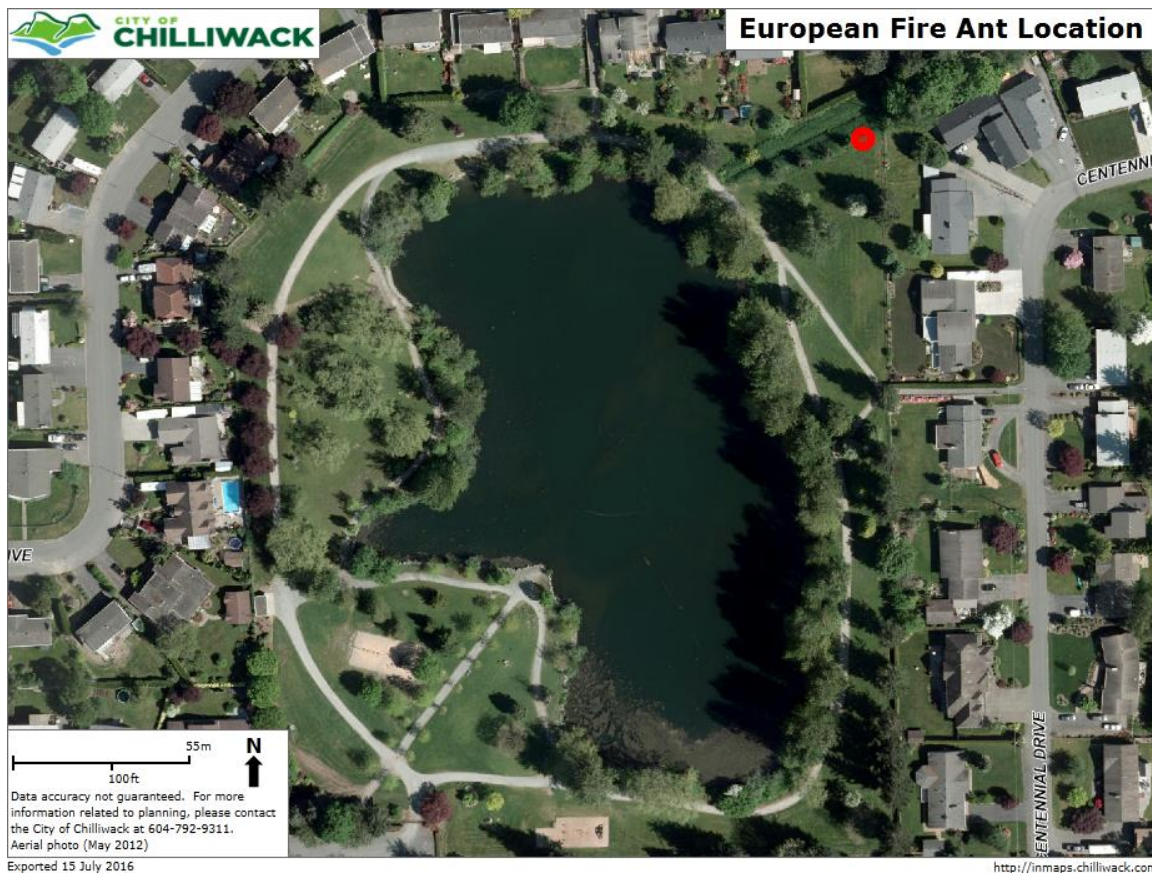
- Small in size (1/2 cm) and red in colour
- Constricted "waist" has two segments (most native species have only one)
- Two backward-point spines on the middle body section, visible only with a magnifying glass
- Nests are built underground and do not include soil mounds on the surface



*It is important to note that there are many species of ants, including red ones, which are native to our region and beneficial. Please do not assume that any red ant you see is a European fire ant. European fire ants can be very difficult to identify, even for a trained eye with a magnifying glass. For help identifying specimens, they should be sent to the Ministry of Agriculture in Abbotsford (contact information is available on the City's website at [www.chilliwack.com/fireants](http://www.chilliwack.com/fireants)).*

## Where were European fire ants found at Sardis Park?

EFAs were confirmed to occur in the north east corner of Sardis Park. The location, as indicated by the red dot, is far from any walking path, playground, or other park amenities. City staff are conducting further investigations to check for other EFA-affected areas at the Park.



### **Why are European fire ants a problem?**

These ants can be aggressive when disturbed and deliver a painful sting. As with any bug bite, it can sometimes lead to an allergic reaction requiring medical treatment. EFAs also displace beneficial native ants.

### **What is the City doing about European fire ants?**

For the recent discovery of EFAs at Sardis Park, the City is responding with caution signage/notification, treatment of the affected area, and monitoring for spread.

On private land, the City can assist owners to connect with testing facilities, experts, and information on the most current control practices. The City has also engaged in public education to avoid the spread of EFAs through an EFA webpage ([www.chilliwack.com/fireants](http://www.chilliwack.com/fireants)), community information meeting and social media.

### **What product is being used to treat the European fire ants and are there any risks associated with it?**

Experts recommend a low concentration (0.25%) permethrin product for treating EFAs. There have been many trials done on different treatment methods, and this seems to be the only one proven to be effective at this time. The City will be following the general process outlined on Dr. Robert Higgins' webpage and video: [http://faculty.tru.ca/rhiggins/control\\_of\\_myrmica\\_rubra\\_2.htm](http://faculty.tru.ca/rhiggins/control_of_myrmica_rubra_2.htm).

Permethrin is a synthetic product that is federally recommended for controlling insects and is commonly used for treating head lice and scabies in humans. For context, the Canadian Paediatric Society suggests a 1% permethrin cream for the treatment of head lice. A 5% permethrin cream is recommended to treat scabies in children. These products, which are applied directly to human skin, are much more concentrated than the 0.25% solution used to treat EFAs.

Although the toxicity to mammals is very low, cats and fish have a higher sensitivity. As such, all treated areas at Sardis Park will be covered with wire mesh to keep cats out. Further, treatments are very localized in an approximate 30cm diameter nest site. Broadcast spray will not be used.

*Note: the EFAs we have in BC are only distantly related to the "true" fire ant species (red imported fire ant) found in the Southern US and Latin America, and respond differently to pesticides. You may read about treatment options that work on the fire ants in the US that are not effective on our local EFAs; some US pesticides are also prohibited from use in Canada.*

### **Is it safe to go to Sardis Park?**

Yes, Sardis Park is still open and safe for all visitors. It is advised for people and pets to avoid the far north east corner where the EFAs are located (location is signed), to avoid possible stings.

### **Are there other known locations of European Fire Ants?**

EFAs have been reported to occur on private land in Chilliwack. However, this is the first known and confirmed site on public land.

### **What should I do if I suspect European Fire Ants?**

For suspected occurrences of EFAs on private land, residents should visit [www.chilliwack.com/fireants](http://www.chilliwack.com/fireants) for information, treatment procedures, and safety tips or call the City's Environmental Services Department at 604.793.2907. The same number can be used to report suspected cases of EFAs on public land.

If you suspect you have been stung by EFAs and are experiencing a strong reaction call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 for advice, or call 9-1-1 for severe (anaphylactic) reactions.