
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ANTS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the invasive species
2 known as the little fire ant, or *Wasmannia auropunctata*, poses a
3 threat to human health, wildlife, agriculture, and tourism. The
4 little fire was first discovered on the island of Hawaii in 1999
5 and has since spread to the islands of Kauai, Lanai, Oahu, and
6 Maui. Little fire ants possess a very painful sting that causes
7 burning and welts and can blind dogs and cats. If left
8 unmanaged, growing populations of little fire ants at hotels,
9 golf courses, and parks in the State are threats to the State's
10 residents and tourists. Little fire ants also threaten farmers,
11 who may harvest ant-infested crops and facilitate the spread of
12 sapsucking plant pests, like mealybugs, that can decrease crop
13 yields.

14 The legislature further finds that the world-renowned
15 invasive species mitigation research being carried out by the
16 Hawaii ant lab is key to combatting the little fire ants' spread
17 in Hawaii. In 2018, due to the great demand for the Hawaii ant



1 lab's services, the legislature appropriated \$200,000 to the
2 University of Hawaii at Manoa college of tropical agriculture
3 and human resources to establish and staff an extension office
4 of the Hawaii ant lab on the island of Hawaii. Since its
5 opening, the west Hawaii office has been inundated with calls
6 and requests for assistance from the west Hawaii community. The
7 detection and eradication efforts the extension agents do is
8 crucial to controlling the spread of little fire ants on the
9 island of Hawaii.

10 The legislature recognizes that the coronavirus disease
11 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had devastating impacts on the
12 State's economy and has created additional challenges for
13 balancing the State's budget. Approximately ten per cent of
14 public sector funding has been reduced statewide, and moneys in
15 the state budget have been redirected to cover crucial programs.
16 The Hawaii ant lab has, in past years, received the majority of
17 its operational funding through the department of agriculture's
18 pest inspection, quarantine, and eradication fund. However,
19 recent funding cuts will require the Hawaii ant lab to either
20 terminate half its staff or reduce working hours by half.



1 Either decision would significantly disrupt the office's ability
2 to protect the State from this harmful and invasive ant species.

3 The legislature acknowledges that the Hawaii ant lab
4 provides an imperative and necessary service to the people of
5 Hawaii.

6 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate
7 funds for the research, extension, and control of the little
8 fire ant and other harmful ant species.

9 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general
10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2022-2023 for
12 research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and
13 other harmful ant species (LNR402).

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
15 land and natural resources for the purposes of this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2022.



Report Title:

DLNR; Little Fire Ant; Appropriation

Description:

Appropriates an unspecified sum to the Department of Land and Natural Resources (LNR402) for research, extension, and control of the little fire ant and other harmful ants. (HD1)

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