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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO LITTLE FIRE ANTS.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that little fire ants are  
2 an invasive species that are spreading rapidly throughout the  
3 State. Little fire ants are yellow-red to light brown in color  
4 and are very small, approximately 1.5 millimeters in length,  
5 making the ants extremely difficult to detect. The ants thrive  
6 in damp environments and establish colonies on the ground and in  
7 trees, allowing the ants to easily spread in Hawaii's humid  
8 climate and environment.

9           The legislature additionally finds that, worldwide, the  
10 little fire ant is considered an agricultural pest due to its  
11 painful sting. The sting typically causes an intense burning  
12 sensation and painful, itchy welts that can last for weeks. In  
13 addition to foraging on the ground, little fire ants forage in  
14 trees such as banana, palm, and cacao trees. Little fire ants  
15 easily fall or are windblown off branches and leaves and onto  
16 agricultural workers and animals. Stings to the eyes from  
17 little fire ants can cause corneal lesions in humans, livestock,



1 and domestic pets. Domestic and wild animals can be blinded,  
2 and their lifespan shortened with repeated stings to the eyes  
3 and face.

4 The legislature further finds that in addition to stinging  
5 farm workers and livestock, little fire ants facilitate an  
6 increase in sapsucking plant pests such as scales, aphids, and  
7 mealybugs, leading to further crop yield losses and additional  
8 labor and chemical input expense.

9 The supply of available agricultural workers in Hawaii is  
10 already critically short. Little fire ants have significantly  
11 impacted the ability of agricultural operators to retain labor  
12 in infested areas. In addition to agriculture, little fire ant  
13 infestations can cause significant other economic damage,  
14 specifically related to parks, outdoor recreations, and schools.

15 The legislature finds that the Hawaii ant lab was  
16 established in 2009 to address the overwhelming need for  
17 research, advice, and technical assistance to address and  
18 eradicate little fire ant infestations. The Hawaii invasive  
19 species council and Hawaii department of agriculture provided  
20 most of the funding for the Hawaii ant lab at the university of  
21 Hawaii. In fiscal year 2020-2021 the Hawaii ant lab received



1 \$378,835 to carry out its work and \$340,866 in fiscal year 2021-  
2 2022. However, the funding was not renewed due to budget cuts  
3 and the repeal of the agricultural development and food security  
4 special fund. This reduction in funding has led to staff having  
5 to reduce working hours for parts of 2021 and 2022. While the  
6 legislature made a one-time appropriation of \$500,000 in 2022 to  
7 address the funding shortfall and help the Hawaii ant lab retain  
8 its staff, funding for fiscal year 2024-2025 is unknown.

9 The purpose of this Act is to protect agricultural crops  
10 and workers by appropriating funds to support the Hawaii ant lab  
11 in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

12 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general  
13 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so  
14 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
15 native resources and fire protection program (LNR402) to support  
16 the Hawaii ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants  
17 in the State.

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

20 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
21 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,



# H.B. NO. 2672

1 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the  
 2 appropriations contained in H.B. No. , will cause the state  
 3 general fund expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be  
 4 exceeded by \$ or per cent. In addition, the  
 5 appropriation contained in this Act will cause the general fund  
 6 expenditure ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be further  
 7 exceeded by \$ or per cent. The combined total  
 8 amount of general fund appropriations contained in only these  
 9 two Acts will cause the state general fund expenditure ceiling  
 10 for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by  
 11 \$ or per cent. The reasons for exceeding the  
 12 general fund expenditure ceiling are that:

- 13 (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
- 14 serve the public interest; and
- 15 (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
- 16 addressed by this Act.

17 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY:

  
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 JAN 24 2024



# H.B. NO. 2672

**Report Title:**

Little Fire Ants; Hawaii Ant Lab; Agricultural Pests;  
Appropriation; Expenditure Ceiling

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to support the Hawaii ant lab in mitigating the effects of little fire ants in the State.

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