WHITEFOOTED ANT

Scientific names: *Technomyrmex albipes, T. difficilis, T. vitiensis*
Order: Hymenoptera  Family: Formicidae
Common name: whitefooted ant

**DESCRIPTION**
Adults have different body types according to their role in the colony
- Adult workers are females, wingless, 2 to 4 mm (< ¼”) long, and dull black with yellowish-white lower legs.
- Queens are larger, winged early in life, and lay fertile and infertile eggs throughout their lives.
- Males are wingless, short-lived, and function only in reproduction.

**DAMAGE**
- Damage by whitefooted ants (WFA) is usually indirect since they tend honeydew-producing insects (mealybugs, aphids, soft scales, whiteflies), protecting them from control by natural enemies.
- Although WFA are strongly attracted to sweet foods, such as plant nectar and honeydew, they also feed on decaying plant and animal tissue.
- WFA are a nuisance to homeowners as they forage indoors and outdoors, attracted by food and electrical contacts.

**LIFE CYCLE / BEHAVIOR**  The lifespan of worker ants is not known, but Queens can live more than a year.
- **Eggs** are tiny (.5 mm), white or yellowish, oval, and are found, along with other developmental stages, in the nest constructed of dirt and plant debris (such as red ginger flowers).
- Young **larvae** are legless, pale, and shaped like a crook-necked gourds (heads at smaller, narrow end).
- Larvae develop into pupae without cocoons; both pupae and larvae are often mistaken for eggs.
- Whitefooted ants are very difficult to control because they do not exchange baits orally. If the majority of workers feed on the bait and die, the rest of the colony will eventually die of starvation.

**HABITAT**
- White-footed ants are often found in forested areas, between 1,000 to 5,000 feet elevation, where annual rainfall exceeds 60 inches; however, these ants occur down to sea level in Hawai`i (HDOA).
- WFA nest in vegetation, as well as in houses and other structures, preferring to be near moisture and food sources, and where they are protected from predators.

WFA can be found nesting in trees, under bark, in branch crotches, undersides of leaves, and rotting logs.

## BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: WHITE-FOOTED ANT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTIONS AVAILABLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Limit plant overcrowding to slow the spread of ants in the field.</td>
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<td>▪ Survey nursery/field stock with sugar water or liquid sugary baits plus borax (sodium tetraborate decahydrate) for presence of white-footed ants.</td>
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### MONITORING TECHNIQUES

- Inspect all incoming propagative materials for ants before introducing into the nursery.
- Limit plant overcrowding to slow the spread of ants in the field.
- Survey nursery/field stock with sugar water or liquid sugary baits plus borax (sodium tetraborate decahydrate) for presence of white-footed ants.

### SELECT BEST CONTROL METHOD

- Inspect all field/nursery stock for ants before movement.
- Use residual pyrethroid insecticides, such as bifenthrin, which are effective on workers.
- Incorporate bifenthrin in potting media when planting.
- Keep area free of any plant debris where ants can hide.
- Use sugary baits containing borates, which can kill workers by starvation (toxic bait is not orally transferred between workers).

### TREATMENT BEFORE MARKET

- Place liquid sugary baits around holding area to monitor for ants.

### FINAL INSPECTION

- Visually inspect all plants for ants before shipment.
- Treat with a pyrethroid insecticide before shipping to assure there are no live ants.

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**Precautionary statement / Disclaimer:** These recommendations are provided only as a guide. Please read and follow all label directions.