

Question on Notice

No. 1328

Asked on 25 October 2023

DR M ROBINSON asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on fire ants on North Stradbroke Island and advise (a) infestation locations and treatment programs being undertaken, (b) the timeframe to rid fire ants and (c) the costs involved in eradication treatments to date?

ANSWER:

The National Fire Ant Eradication Program (the Program) detected red imported fire ants on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) in January 2023.

In April 2023 a small infestation of fire ants was detected on a mine leased site approximately 5 kilometres northeast of the Dunwich township.

On 25 July 2023 a mining company on Minjerribah notified the Program of a suspect nest on a rehabilitation area approximately 11.3 kilometres south-east from the Dunwich township.

Surveillance of a small area of the rehabilitation property between 31 July and 8 August 2023 revealed approximately 100 nests.

Two nests have been confirmed on Janguwajah (Macleay Island) in August and October 2023.

The Program has worked collaboratively with the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) to implement a response plan comprising nest destruction, broadscale treatment and surveillance, and local community education.

To achieve local eradication of the islands it was recommended that six rounds of broadscale treatment be applied out to two kilometres from known infestation during 2023-24, followed by annual surveillance over three years to provide confidence that the islands are clear of the pest.

To date the Program has completed the initial response treatment around all detections, plus three rounds of broadscale treatment of the Dunwich infestation at an approximate cost of \$140 000.

Discussions are underway to finalise a collaborative response plan with key stakeholders. Human assisted movement is a major risk to the spread of fire ants.