

Light green shading: • 1 treatment round • Carried out between September 2022 and November 2022. Light purple shading: • 2 treatment rounds Light red shading: • 3 treatment rounds • Carried out between September 2022 and May 2023 Aerial surveillance blue squares • Covers 65,000ha across Somerset, Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim, Ipswich, Moreton Bay, Logan and Gold Coast LGAs.

SCENIC RIM

Boonah meeting fires up over ant issue

Sep 14 2022 | Updated September 15, 2022

Lara Hart



3 min read

A COMMUNITY meeting to discuss and share information about the Queensland Government’s fire ant program uncovered ‘disturbing and alarming behaviour’ by program operatives according to Mount French landowner Brett Nagel.

Mr Nagel formed a group named Boonah Community Fire Ants last month after being informed that fire ant bait would be dropped by helicopter across a large section of the Fassifern Valley. The Boonah Fire Ant community’s first meeting was held on September 1.

“At the meeting I informed everyone about the biology of the ants, how they live, breed, propagate, how dangerous they are and all that sort of thing,” he said.

“Then people started sharing stories about seeing strangers appearing outside their bedroom window, baiting their property.

“[Residents] have said ‘hang on, I didn’t let you into the property to do this and they said ‘well, your husband signed the form so you’ve given us the right to come in here and bait’.

“Then there’s the lady who owns a large fruit farm and is in the process of being organic certified.

“She told them no bait was to be dropped on her property.

“They said ‘well bad luck lady, we’re going to do it whether you like it or not’.”

Mr Nagel said the landowner eventually conceded defeat but made it clear no drops were to be done on the date a wedding was planned in the orchard.

“They dropped those baits on the day of the wedding, they flew in really low, then they gave her the middle finger out of the helicopter.”

Mr Nagel said in his opinion crews handing out forms to sign for permission to bait was a farce.

“Even if you refuse to sign, they’ll do it anyway,” he said.

Mr Nagel said the method of placing poison on the ground where there are no ants wouldn’t work because “it will never reach the queen thereby sterilising and starving her”.

He said the poison itself worked, but for it to work effectively it needed to be carried back to the queen and if no nests were evident “bait drops made no sense”.

He said another community concern expressed at the meeting was farms with organic status being unable to market produce as chemical free.

The Fire Ant Baiting program in the Scenic Rim has resulted in residents venting their frustration via Facebook as well.

When the article on fire ant bait drops appeared in the Fassifern Guardian, its Facebook page garnered comments by readers like Suzie Marie who wrote:

“Apparently Malcolm Roberts was in Boonah last night to express his concern for lack of consultation with the community, lack of data sheets given to farms (the data sheets given to farms are incomplete and that needs to be pointed out) they are using alternatives but the government is refusing to use them. Apparently mass baiting is not required if there is zero evidence of fire ants especially if you have free range chooks”.

According to information provided by the National Fire Ant Eradication Program, the ingredients found in baits can also be found in pet flea treatments and cockroach baits. Pyriproxyfen is also registered for use on many horticultural crops for the treatment of whiteflies and scale insects.

It also states pattern and drift testing is carried out before each treatment season to ensure bait use follows permit conditions and government standards.

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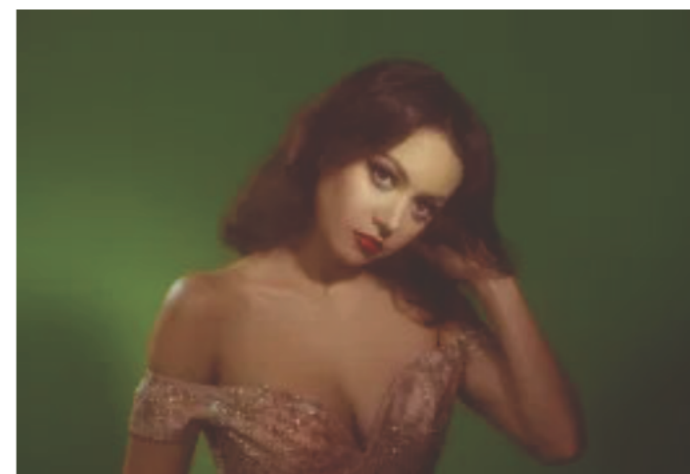
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