**Linepithema humile**

**Taxon**  
*Linepithema humile* (Mayr, 1868)

**Family / Order / Class / Phylum**  
Formicidae / Hymenoptera / Insecta / Arthropoda

### COMMON NAMES (English only)
Argentine ant

### SYNONYMS
*Iridomyrmex humilis* (Mayr, 1868)

more synonyms at:
http://ati.biosci.ohio-state.edu:210/hymenoptera/nomenclator.name_entry?text_entry=linepithema+humile

### SHORT DESCRIPTION
Ant of light brown colour; females are 4.5-4.9 mm long and workers 2.1-3.0mm long. They are omnivorous, feeding on honeydew, nectar, insects and carrion.

### BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

**Dispersal mechanisms**
Local dispersal by budding of large unicolonial nests (up to 150 m / year); long-distance dispersal within the introduced ranges human-mediated.

**Reproduction**
Haplodiploid system with sterile workers; polygynous (multi-queened) nests; social organisation variable in its native range (from multiclonial to unicolonial), but entirely unicolonial in introduced range, with surface area covered by single supercolonies ranging from 2500m² to many km².

**Known predators/herbivores**
Only a few parasitoids are known, e.g. a nematode (*Diploscapter lycostoma*), but their use as biological control is currently not considered feasible.

**Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)**
In the absence of queens, workers can lay unfertilized eggs, which develop into fully functional males.

### HABITAT

**Native (EUNIS code)**
G: tropical and subtropical natural forests

**Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)**
I: Regularly or recently cultivated agricultural, horticultural and domestic habitats, G4: Mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland; preferably associated with disturbed, human-modified habitats in its introduced range, but may also invade natural habitats (e.g., oak and pine woodland in the Mediterranean).

**Habitat requirements**
Moderate temperature and moisture level

### DISTRIBUTION

**Native Range**
South America (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay)

**Known Introduced Range**
The species occurs throughout the world on all continents, especially in mediterranean-type climates, and many oceanic islands.
Trend
Ecological niche models predict that with changing climate the species will expand at higher latitudes.

MAP (European distribution)
Only outdoor occurrences are indicated on the map.

INTRODUCTION PATHWAY
Transported with vehicles (airplanes, ships) together with goods and materials, soil, plants, etc.

IMPACT
Ecosystem Impact
The supercolonies, by reducing costs associated with territoriality, allow high worker densities and interspecific dominance in invaded habitats. It has displaced, even leading to species extinction in some cases, native ant species in many parts of the world. It also competes with other arthropod species for resources (e.g., for nectar with bees) and reduces local arthropod diversity; taxa other than arthropods are also affected (e.g. nest failure of birds). Ecosystem level impacts such as reduction of seed dispersal capacity and disruption of mutualistic associations with other species are documented.

Health and Social Impact
Regarded as a nuisance for tourism at some places on the Mediterranean coast.

Economic Impact
Homoptera-tending may increase Homoptera populations causing some crop loss. However, costs are considered to be low.

MANAGEMENT
Prevention
Unknown.
Mechanical
Unknown.
Chemical
Several toxicants applied via “ant baits”, including insect growth regulators. Application needs supervision to optimize results and to minimize side-effects on non-target species.
Biological
Since Argentine ants prefer disturbed sites, any extensification of land use or reduction in monoculture may help prevent high densities of this species.

REFERENCES

OTHER REFERENCES

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