

Solenopsis invicta (RIFA) and *Solenopsis geminata* (Red Ant)

The Red Imported Fire Ant is a major threat to the Micronesian region. It is difficult to identify because it looks nearly the same as the Tropical Fire (often called the Red Ant) which is very common throughout the Pacific.

These two species can be very difficult to tell apart, even for experts. Generally, RIFA are darker in color, usually a dark red, while Red Ants are a lighter orange to orange/red. Red Ants are also slightly more hairy than RIFA. If you have a large number of specimens, look at the large major workers. Red Ant majors have a much larger head in relation to their body size, often the top of the head will have 2 bulges and there will be an indented suture line running down the face between the bulges. RIFA never have this feature.

On the following page are more detailed descriptions of the differences between these two species.

The Red Imported Fire Ant



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The Tropical Fire Ant



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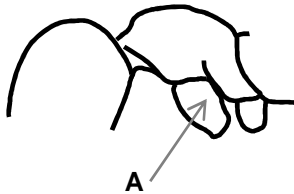
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The Red Imported Fire Ant

The Tropical Fire Ant

1. Tooth or flange over front coxa

Torso (in profile view). The entire margin of the RIFA front coxa can be seen in profile view. There are no teeth or flanges over-lapping (A).

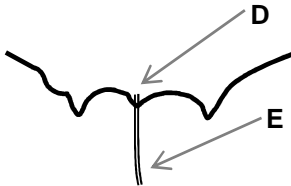


Torso (in profile view). Many, but not all Red Ants will have a tooth (B) or flange (C) over-lapping the front coxa. This is perhaps the feature that is most easily seen but it is not definitive. RIFA never have this but Most Red Ants do. Sometimes the tooth or flange has broken off but the scar can still be seen.

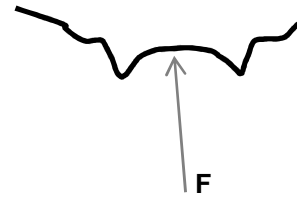


2. Clypeal teeth

The head (in frontal view). RIFA have a central clypeal tooth (see arrow D) as well as 2 outer clypeal teeth. These teeth point downwards between the mandibles. The central tooth also has a hair or seta (arrow E) that points down.

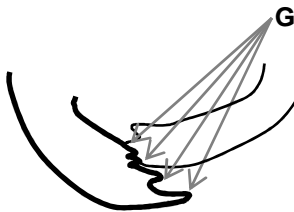


The head (in frontal view). Tropical Fire Ants do not have a central clypeal tooth (see arrow F) but do have the 2 outer clypeal teeth. These teeth point downwards between the mandibles.



3. Teeth on mandibles

The head (in frontal view). RIFA mandibles terminate in four teeth. Sometimes the first two teeth are very small but in all cases, there will be four teeth (G)



The head (in frontal view). Red Ant mandibles terminate in three teeth (H). Sometimes the mandibles of major workers have been worn down by constant work and these appear stubby, without distinct teeth (I).

