

Spotlight on Local Business

LAVA PAWS

Lava Paws has been owned and operated by community member Meghan Jerolaman since 2016. It started as a pet sitting business and turned into a dog treat and raw dog food business. Meghan saw what pet owners were feeding their dogs and the ailments some dogs had and knew that their diet, treats, and lifestyle were influencing factors. This past May, Lava Paws expanded into Hilo and now has a Doggie Deli located at 207 Kilauea Ave in Hilo.

Lava Paws offers raw dog food and dehydrated treats as well as fresh poke bowls and other healthy fresh items. Lava Paws sources about 90% of their products from Hawaii and Molokai and work with over 20 different farmers and hunters. Lava Paws also offers diet consultations and therapeutic foods for allergies, kidney disease, obesity, joint issues, CCL (dog knee) repairs, and much more.

You can find Meghan at the Cooper Center's Sunday Farmers Market. 6-10am (where it all started) and she will be offering fun, fresh items at the Thursday Night Market 4-7pm.

submitted by Jim Buck



Lava Paws Doggie Deli in Hilo

Little Fire Ants in Volcano

I had heard about Little Fire Ants (LFA) but did not understand how serious their impact had become for Hawaii Island. And, in fact, most of the infestations over the years had been documented at lower elevations. I mistakenly believed LFA were tropical in nature, and did not live at higher elevations like Volcano. I was wrong.

In November 2018, LFA were discovered on Kilauea near the Steam Vents area and the Mauna Ulu parking lot. The presence of LFA in the National Park quickly dispelled the myth that they could not tolerate or survive higher elevations. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's Invasive Species Specialist Group considers the LFA one of 100 worst invasive species. LFA have proven tenacious, and adaptable, brought to the Big Island from South America. Like the coqui frog, LFA probably hitch hiked in plants. The LFA has proven it can survive at Kilauea summit (4,000 elevation). The risk for infestation in Volcano Village is real. All LFA need to survive are sources of food, moisture, preferring warm protected, shady places

to establish nests to begin colonizing an area. They require only small niches to survive.

LFA were initially detected on the Big Island in the late 1990s in lower Puna. Since then, they have been detected in all districts on the Big Island. They can be found on Kauai, Oahu and Maui, where early control measures have slowed down the spread. The main goal for Hawaii Island is to control them where they are, and prevent introduction into areas not yet infested.

LFA are significantly smaller than most ants measuring just 1/16", and therefore easily escape notice, hide and hitch hike. And most important, LFA come into an area by way of human activity. They hitch hike in cargo, shipped commodities, in our vehicles, on construction equipment, in new or recycled building materials, in plants and cut flowers, gravel, cinder, tree fruits and more. When moved through human activity, LFA establish colonies with multiple queens and hundreds of worker ants. They have been found in the island's public recreation spaces including beaches, parks, and forested gardens. Colonies in trees are easily disturbed, resulting in stinging ants falling unto unsuspecting people, who may carry them back to their vehicles or on their clothing.

Impact on Farming: LFA are one of the most invasive pests and have devastating impacts on agriculture. They hurt small farmers especially hard. LFA have affected farm production and yields. Additional costs are incurred from infestation control efforts, injury to farm workers, retaining workers, and limiting markets for their products (quarantines and bans on



Raw Dog Food Chubs (left) Custom Made Birthday Cakes for dogs (right)

infested products). Diversifying and expanding agriculture, as well as sustainable or organic farming, become more complicated and costly to undertake.

Impact on Native Forest: LFA do pose a threat to our fragile forest eco-system. Because LFA favor moist, shady areas, trees, moss and plant debris in the forest offer conditions favorable for infestation. We still need to learn more about how LFA impact our rain forests, as well as Hawaii's endangered and endemic insects, plants, and birds, which have evolved in isolation of invasive ants.

Impact on home and property: LFA can affect the quality of life we enjoy in our own spaces, as well as adding cost and time to control infestations. LFA have been found nesting in closets, electrical outlet boxes, between walls, in gutters, and along the perimeter of homes. Their sting can be very painful, irritating, and can become infected. Some people develop allergic reactions to the sting. Even pet food dishes left outdoors attract foraging LFA which then crawl onto pets while they eat, stinging their eyes, which can lead to blindness.

Implications for Volcano Village: LFA in the Park is a wake up call for all of us living in Volcano and neighboring subdivisions. Now, rather than later, is the time for us to take LFA seriously. The cost to individuals and businesses to control LFA once found is expensive, time consuming and may take months to years to control, if ever. Finding LFA nests while their population is still small, together with recommended treatment methods, will greatly increase successful control.

Checking for LFA: LFA forage throughout the day but the best times to survey is at dawn and dusk because the numbers of worker ants looking for food are greater. The simplest method is to smear a little peanut butter on the end of a stick (popsicle or chopstick). Place the stick flat on the ground, in potted plants, bagged products, the crotch of trees, etc. Wait 45-60 minutes and check for ants. If any ant is found, bag it immediately (remember, they fall quickly to the ground), freeze it overnight and deliver to the Hawaii Ant Lab for microscopic identification. Proper identification is critical to insure the ant in question is, in fact, LFA, and not a "look-alike". You'll want to be absolutely sure you have LFA before embarking on a time consuming survey of your entire property and ongoing, costly control methods.

There are many LFA products in stores and it can be confusing without guidance. It is easy to incur unnecessary cost and do more harm to your home and property if the wrong ant bait or insecticide are used.



As a community we can stop the accidental introduction and spread of LFA in Volcano Village by adopting a few simple actions steps:

1. Check all plants for LFA before planting.
2. Have a place where you can quarantine potted plants until you have time to check for LFA (see Hawaii Ant Lab website

Tropical fire ant ("red ant")



Little fire ant

www.littlefireants.com

3. Check all bagged aggregate and soil products before opening.
4. Ensure that compost from landfills is free of LFA
5. Before buying bulk aggregate or soil materials, ask the company if they have found and treated for LFA.
6. Check fruits & produce sold by independent, uncertified vendors, such as at farmers markets.
7. Check personal items before leaving parks and beaches where LFA are known to exist.
8. Guidance for surveying and baiting: Hawaii Ant Lab

If you think you may have LFA and if you are the least bit suspicious, don't wait. Take action right away. You'll be glad you did. Here's how to get started.

- www.littlefireants.com
- www.StopTheAnt.org
- www.biisc.org/lfa-faqs
- www.643pest.org/

submitted by Kathleen Mishina

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