

Red imported fire ant (RIFA)

(Solenopsis invicta)

- ❑ Native to southern South America (Brazil and Argentina); introduced into SE U.S.A. and spreading now into southern CA; frequently intercepted in nursery shipments from FL.
- ❑ Hosts: RIFA colonies are dependant on moisture, so they can become established in areas with extensive irrigation. The ants are attracted to sweets, grain, and protein substances including meat, butter, cheese, nuts, bread products, bacon, grease, jelly or jam, and other commodities. Adults gnaw through roots, stems, and leaves of plants and ring the bark of trees (including citrus), and can also attack young, vulnerable livestock such as rabbits, pigs, newly hatched chicks, ducks, and quail.
- ❑ Field ID: Adult about 3-5 mm long, dark red, abdominal pedicel with 2 nodes; antenna with 10 segments and 2-segmented club. RIFA can be distinguished from native fire ants by its dark vertical mark between antennal bases; the presence of 3 clypeal teeth (no mark and 2 clypeal teeth in the Southwestern fire ant). RIFA nests have multiple entrances.

