
DARWIN'S ANT

Doleromyrma darwiniana



This species was first recorded as nesting here in 1959, from Penrose, Auckland. The nest was destroyed by Department of Agriculture officials. A probably separate establishment in Christchurch was first reported in 1979 and it has since been located at several localities in the Christchurch-Lyttelton area.

Apart from some spreading northward in the Auckland area, this species still tends to remain associated very closely with towns or cities with ports, strongly suggesting separate port invasions in some cases. Thus it has been recorded in Whangarei, Mt Maunganui, Gisborne, Napier, Blenheim, Nelson and Lyttelton.

Length about 2 mm; colour of head dark brown, rest of the body and legs light brown. Refer also to the generic features above. Similar in appearance to Argentine ants (*L. humile*) but workers are easily separated in the field as they give off a strong odour when crushed (little or no odour for Argentine ants)

They occur most commonly in dry forested areas, including coastal scrub or heath, where they nest in soil, under rocks or rotten logs, or occasionally in abandoned nests of other ants. Nests usually contain several hundred workers which disperse quickly into protected areas when disturbed." They are occasionally found in houses in both Australia and New Zealand . Specimens of *D. darwiniana* in this country have been collected mainly in urban locations, industrial and residential (domestic gardens, for example).

Appear to spread predominantly by budding and can build up large densities. Commonly found nesting in situations such as potted plants, probably facilitating their spread around New Zealand.

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Not capable of stinging but will occasionally enter houses in large numbers foraging for sweet foods. Attains large densities in urban gardens becoming a nuisance and may displace other invertebrates. Tends aphids and mealy bugs and may also spread disease.