

Invasive Ant Threat



INFORMATION SHEET Number 35 • *Tetramorium pacificum*

Risk: Medium

Tetramorium pacificum Mayr

Taxonomic Category

Family:	Formicidae
Subfamily:	Myrmicinae
Tribe:	Tetramoriini
Genus:	<i>Tetramorium</i>
Species:	<i>pacificum</i>

Common name(s): none known

Original name: *Tetramorium pacificum* Mayr

Synonyms or changes in combination or taxonomy: *Tetramorium scabrum* Mayr, *Tetramorium pacificum* var. *subscabrum* Emery

General Description

Identification

Size: total length 3.7–4.6 mm.

Colour: uniform dark brown, blackish brown or black.

Surface sculpture: variable in density and intensity, but most of head and dorsal alitrunk sculptured, while gaster smooth excepting for base of first tergite, which almost always has some striation present at its base, even if very faint.

General description: antennae 12-segmented; including a 3-segmented club. Eyes moderate in size. Mandibles usually unsculptured. Frontal carinae long and strongly developed, reaching well back beyond eyes and usually approaching occiput. Medial clypeus with 3 strong longitudinal carinae, sometimes with another weak pair; anterior margin with a median notch or impression. Area of the clypeus immediately below antennal sockets raised into a sharp-edged ridge, which forms the lower section of a pit around the base of the antennae. Propodeum dorsally with 2 long, acute, narrow and somewhat upcurved spines; additionally a pair of flanges (metapleural lobes) present near the insertion of the petiole, these acute and upcurved, usually broad. Two nodes (petiole and postpetiole) present; petiole in profile characteristically shaped, with the posterior face longer than the anterior so the convex dorsum slopes upwards posteriorly. In dorsal view the petiole is usually slightly longer than broad. Erect or suberect long hairs present on all dorsal surfaces of head and body. Sting present, tip with a triangular extension.

Sources: Bolton 1977, 1979

Formal description and keys: Bolton 1977, 1979

Behavioural and Biological Characteristics

Feeding and foraging

T. pacificum is a general scavenger and predator and is nocturnal (www4).

Colony characteristics

T. pacificum nests in the soil under logs, in hollow twigs or rotten wood, and under small tree trunk epiphytes (Mann 1921; Wilson & Taylor 1967; www4).

Dispersal

No information found.

Habitats occupied

This ant is found primarily in closed, moist forest at elevations ranging from 130 to 700 m (Wilson & Taylor 1967; www4). It is found on foliage and tree branches (up to 35 m above the ground) and under moss on tree trunks (Mann 1921; Wilson & Taylor 1967).

Global Distribution (See map)

Native to

The Indo-pacific region (www32).

Introduced to

North America (www13; Creighton 1950), Australia (Clark 1941), Christmas Island (Taylor 1990). It is one of the most common ants in the Pacific region and has probably been introduced to some islands, e.g., some of the Society Islands, which are thought to originally have had no native ants (Morrison 1996a) and Niue (Collingwood 2001).

McGlynn (1999; www32) also lists this species as having established in the Galapagos islands, Central America, the Central Caribbean islands, Florida, and Canada, but the references cited refer to records of *T. guineese* (Fab.), that are probably *T. bicaranatum* not *T. pacificum*. *T. pacificum* is not listed in checklists of ants of Central America (www55) or Florida (Deyrup *et al.* 2000). McGlynn (1999) also listed Hawaii, but *T. pacificaum* is only a quarantine interception and is not established (www45, www46).

History of spread

Despite widespread introductions little is known of the details of the various introductions. In California it was introduced into a nursery prior to 1950, but may not be established (www13).

Interception history at NZ border

There have been 10 recorded interceptions of this species at the border. Of these, 9 were recorded in Auckland associated with fresh produce, cut flowers or nursery stock from Pacific islands. No queens or nests have been intercepted, but there is one record of eggs in taro in sea cargo from Fiji. There have also been 6 interceptions (1 queen) of unidentified *Tetramorium* species from the Pacific and Southeast Asia, some of which could be *T. pacificum*.

Justification for Inclusion as a Threat

A widespread species from the oriental and Australian regions, primarily of moist forest (Wilson & Taylor 1967; www4), which has increased its distribution in the Pacific (e.g., Morrison 1996a; Collingwood 2001) and spread to California (Creighton 1950). It is relatively commonly intercepted at the New Zealand border and its establishment could go unnoticed due to the presence of other *Tetramorium*.

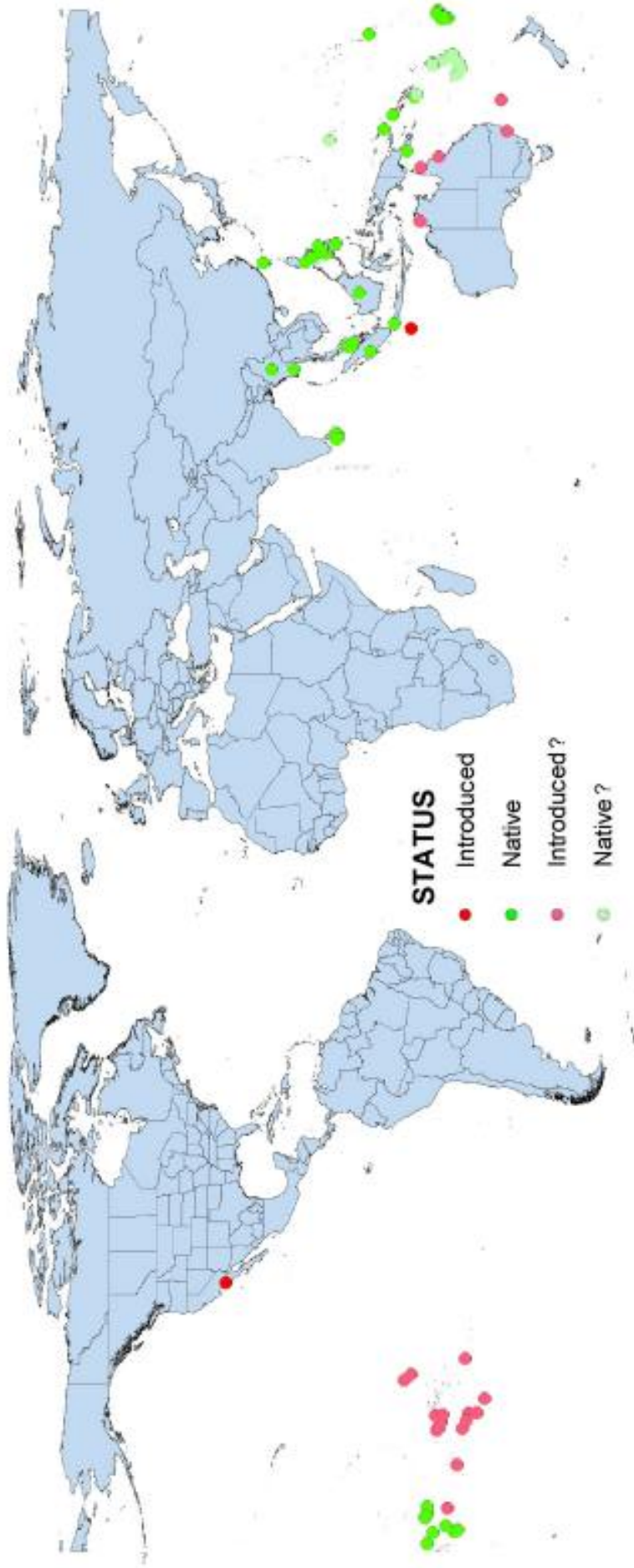
Mitigating factors

Likely that New Zealand's climate is unsuitable (too cold). Probably not established in California (www13). No reports of it being a pest.

Control Technologies

No information on attempts to control this species.

Compiled by Richard Harris, Margaret Stanley & Jo Berry



Global distribution of *Tetramorium pacificum* Mayr