

Fire ant queen found in Osaka, triggering nationwide harbor alert

Latest insect eruption raises specter of long, costly extermination fight

1) TOKYO -- The latest in a rash of stinging fire ant discoveries in Japan has come from the Port of Osaka, where remains appearing to be a queen and a potential nest were found, prompting warnings and countermeasures at ports across Japan as authorities fear widespread infestations.

2) Red imported fire ants, or RIFAs, bite with venom that leaves a burning sting, and in some cases can induce shock and kill their victims. They can wipe out local ant populations and take over their nests. Japan's Environment Ministry has marked them as an invasive species since 2005. They have cropped up in or near a number of Japanese ports this and last month.

3) The ministry called an emergency inspection at the Osaka port Friday after tropical fire ants, a related species with similar venom, were discovered there. Around 100 of the insects were collected. After pesticides were sprayed, further inspections Monday turned up the remains of about 50 more ants -- including winged ones -- from cracks in asphalt.

4) On Tuesday, the ministry said it had determined that the ants were RIFAs, and one appeared to be a queen, which had probably been making a nest. As winged ants can fly distances of more than 10km with a favorable wind, the ministry will comb the harbor's surroundings to make sure there are no nests.

5) Another 15 ports, including those of Hiroshima and Kagoshima, were added to the seven already undergoing emergency inspections. Personnel have been checking for fire ants at ports handling large volumes of imported goods, such as those of Tokyo and Yokohama.

6) The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (国土交通省) has asked the municipalities governing all of the country's 933 ports to alert it immediately if they find an RIFA infestation. Believing the ants may have been mixed in with cargo coming from habitats in China and elsewhere, the ministry also called for 63 ports that regularly run shipments with China, including Tokyo and Yokohama, to administer pesticides in and around their container yards.

7) The ants' string of appearances may stem from the fact that they are "exploding in China," suggests Takahiro Murakami, associate professor of behavioral ecology at Kyushu University.

8) RIFA queens are thought to be capable of laying 2,000 to 3,000 eggs per day. The ants are difficult to purge completely. When New Zealand suffered an infestation in 2001, it spent more than the equivalent of 100 million yen (\$883,500) and two years to successfully eradicate one nest. Other hosts to the ants, including Australia and China, are likewise spending huge sums on exterminating them.

9) In the U.S., people often suffer fire ant bites during farm work, causing economic losses calculated to reach billions of dollars per year.

10) Could the ants have already dug in in Japan? "It's hard to evaluate at present, but it's possible for them to hide away and then multiply explosively even a decade later," said Kouichi Goka, head of ecological risk assessment and control at the National Institute for Environmental Studies' Center for Environmental Biology and Ecosystem Studies. (国立環境研究所生態リスク評価・対策研究室) Green spaces and parks close to ports will need to be watched carefully, Goka said. 【2017-07-05| Nikkei】

The remains of a fire ant, thought to be a queen. (Photo courtesy of the Environment Ministry)



specter 恐ろしいもの、亡霊
1)

a rash of (事件等の)多発
※rash 発疹

stinging 針を持つ、刺す
remains 死骸

infestation 横行、出没
2)

venom (毒蛇やハチの)毒液
induce 誘発する

wipe out 死滅させる

population 個体群、集団

invasive species 侵入種、
⇒特定外来生物(invasive alien species)

3)

pesticide 殺虫剤

turn up (ふいに)見つかる、姿を現す

4)

comb (しらみつぶしに隅々まで)捜す、綿密にチェックする

5)

undergo 受ける、被る

6)

cargo 貨物

habitat 生息地

administer (薬などを)与える、投与する、施す

7)

string of 一続きの

stem from ~から生じる

associate professor 准教授

behavioral ecology 行動生態学

lay eggs 産卵する

purge (悪いものを)一掃する

equivalent 相当物、相当量

likewise 同じく、同様に

10)

dig in 穴を掘って身を隠す

multiply 増加する、繁殖する

★Ice breaker for active discussion

1. What can you say about the rash of fire ants appearances on Japan's soil?

2. What protective measures do you use against ants or any kinds of insects?

3. What do you think about the opinions of experts mentioned in the article?

4. Please share your most terrible experience of being stung by insects or others.

5. Make sentences using the following words: venom, induce, administer, administer, purge and pesticide.