

SIGHT OF FIRE ANTS SPOTTED ON CAMPUS NEAR CHING SHENG STATUE

Red fire ants have arrived at Tamsui Campus! Cheng Chuan-chieh, the Director of the General Services Section of the Office of General Affairs first raised the alarm when he spotted an approximately 10 centimeter high ant-mound on the flower bed behind the Chang Chueh-sheng Statue. Immediately, he caught some ants for verification at the Department of Entomology by Professor Lin Zong-chi. After the confirmation that those were indeed the ferocious fire ants, TKU President, Flora C.I. Chang arrived at the spot to ensure effective measures of eradication would be in place by the University units concerned.

Cheng Chuan-chieh could not be certain how these ants got to Tamsui Campus. Even though he placed some powdery bait, which is the most common measure against these ants, around the mound right after the discovery, he realized that this might not be very effective under present weather condition. As it has rained quite frequently in Tamsui recently, the powder can be washed away easily. Therefore, for the time being, there are some yellow lines instead put around the affected flower bed/meadow and the adjacent Chinese Palace Styled Classrooms to bar any entry. When the weather becomes steadier, the University will put down the bait again. A complete eradication is possible when these ants carry the powder back to their nest. Luckily, only one mound has been found so far.

The military instructor in charge of the Campus Safety and Disaster Prevention Center (CSDPC), Liao Sheng-tai maintains that there has not been any report of stinging incident. All volunteer cleaning activities around the affected region through the Public Service Education Class have been suspended. Liao reminds anyone who finds mounds 10 to 30 centimeter in height and 30 to 50 centimeter wide or any aggressive acting ants should report to Center for Environmental Protection, Safety and Health

(ext. 2005) or CSDPC (ext. 2009) for verification. The Office of Student Affairs has also informed students by e-mail about these dangerous fire ants. It is important to understand that fire ants inflict fiery sting and a blister or pustule will appear after approximately four hours on the area of the sting. In serious cases, cardio-arrest (such as anaphylaxis) or even death can occur. When stung by a fire ant, apply a cold compress to relieve the swelling or pain, but leave the blisters intact. The blisters become itchy while healing and are prone to infection if broken. Those have serious (i.e. allergic) reactions should seek medical attention immediately.

When most students heard of the fire ants on Tamsui Campus, they were taken over by a sense of unease. Some said that they would not go near the Chinese Palace Styled Classrooms for a while, and couples who usually rendezvous in the garden behind the affected area no longer consider the place romantic. One student from the Electrical Engineering Department worries that those ants may move up to the Engineering Building, while the other student, Lee Wei-ning from the Department of Public Administration, wonders whether these resilient ants will take over all meadows on campus. He is apparently neither patient enough for an answer nor in the mood of taking any risk—he now always applies insect spray on his legs before leaving home.

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