

Yellow crazy ants on Tokelau – Education & awareness program

To be conducted in conjunction with the YCA research and baiting program, April – June 2006

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As part of the baiting of yellow crazy ants (YCA) on Fakaofu and Nukunono Atolls, we will also provide an education/awareness program that covers YCA as well as wider biosecurity issues. The program will allow the community to benefit from workshops, a chance to ask questions and get hands on experience with ants, bait and monitoring protocols, ensuring confidence with continuing to safeguard the unique Tokelau environment and lifestyle from biological invasions. There are *three main components* to this program:

DELIVERABLE 1:

Training of local personnel to conduct ant control, monitor ant populations and evaluate success of a control program. This will involve quarantine and environment officers in all aspects and procedures of the operational stage of the baiting on Tokelau, and handing over equipment needed for ongoing monitoring to the future national coordinator of quarantine and environment issues on Tokelau.

1.1 Crazy (ant) training days

Everyone with responsibilities for the environment on Tokelau, plus all those people involved with YCA baiting on Tokelau would need to attend these sessions. For the baiting event, 20 men are required for successful completion of the baiting program. They would all need to attend these days. These practical skills are essential for Tokelauans to learn and practice should there be a need to control ants in the future, on any of the atolls.

The training will provide Tokelauans with the skills and knowledge to control ants themselves, without relying on outside agencies and funding. Training entails either one full day or two half-day sessions that would cover:

- Chemical awareness of toxic baits, and health and safety issues surrounding the particular bait we would use on Tokelau,
- Methods of deployment of baits, including bait stations, hand broadcasting and use near water,
- How to store bait and when to throw it if not used.
- Methods specific to this baiting event, including which islands to bait and mapping baited areas,
- Follow-up monitoring techniques, to document the success of the baiting and prepare for any future events.

We would also help produce a short video of the training and best practice for controlling ants on Tokelau. It is absolutely vital that follow-up monitoring by people on Tokelau be continued for at least 6 months after the baiting program. Monitoring provides information on the effectiveness of the bait, and any impacts on the environment or other animals that might occur because of the bait. It would ensure that Tokelau isn't kept guessing about the impacts of using this method to control ants.

DELIVERABLE 2:

Coordination of the project with an education and awareness program for local people about maintaining quarantine procedures to prevent crazy ants and other invasive species from re-entering Tokelau, and exploding in numbers. The program includes the production of posters, conducting workshops and seminars, and actively engaging in the consultation process of how to best meet Tokelau's future needs in this area.

2.1 Crazy (ant) facts

This part will present facts about invasive insects (ants in particular) and biosecurity information in written format. Ideally, they would all be in both Tokelauan and English languages, and be distributed among the three atolls, Fakaofu, Nukunonu and Atafu. Included would be:

- Colourful and bold A3 sized posters that provide simple biology of YCA, identification and impacts, plus simple methods for control in people's homes. To be displayed in schools, offices and meeting houses.
- Smaller A5 fact sheets that provide biosecurity awareness issues only in relation to YCA, their movement to Tokelau, and between the atolls.
- Information about YCA on the Tokelau.org webpage.

2.2 Crazy (ant) school days

Ideally, these would happen in the first week of the program. From our experience on the atolls, kids are especially interested in their environment, and the schools are keen to incorporate more environment-based learning into their curriculum. We would spend one day at each of the schools on Fakaofu and Nukunonu conducting sessions with every class group. The days would be coordinated with the school Principals on both Fakaofu and Nukunonu They would include:

- Short talks and activities about YCA,
- Observations of live ant colonies in tubs,
- Short walks around the school to show them YCA nests, other ant species, and other interesting things about the trees and insects,
- Discussions about the ecology of their islands with the older students,
- What to look out for in terms of pest insects such as fruit flies, rhinoceros beetles and scale insects.

2.3 Crazy (ant) community workshops

Community seminars/workshops would be held in the meeting houses on both Fakaofu and Nukunonu before any of the toxic bait is distributed on the islands, and ideally, concurrent with the school days. All residents would be welcome at these. Similar to the school days, we would show them live ant colonies, photos of impacts, and detail the methods that are used to kill ants. We would answer all questions, and be available to show them anything in the field that they are interested in. We would also expand on YCA issues to general biosecurity issues, and involve the Quarantine officers as translators in this process. It is vital to engage them in leading community discussion about their roles in ensuring Tokelau remains relatively pest-free in the future.

2.4 Crazy (ant) media activities

This project will act as a model for ant control in small, developing island nations. It is vital that it be made accessible to the Pacific region, international conservation agencies, the New Zealand government, and other interested parties. In addition, transfer of information on Tokelau is facilitated by radio, which is a relatively easy media for us to use during the program.

We would aim to produce:

- Stories for conservation newsletters, magazines and regional print media,
- A training video for Tokelau,
- Interviews and stories for Tokelau and Samoan radio stations.

DELIVERABLE 3:

In consultation with Tokelau, provide a framework based around contingency plans for future invasive ant explosions. This will include a manual encompassing the technical aspects of a response, including health and safety issues regarding bait distribution, contacts for instigating community responses, and building networks, and acknowledging Tokelau's position in the international biosecurity environment.

3.1 Provision of framework for future responses

In consultation with the community, the Taupulega and the Quarantine and Environment officers, this program would culminate in the production of a written manual outlining practical considerations and procedures for the management of future ant invasions on Tokelau. There are practicalities that must be addressed on Tokelau that are not relevant in mainland situations. All social, cultural and political issues unique to Tokelau would be taken into consideration when writing the document.

This document would be bound and kept on each atoll on Tokelau, in the offices in Apia and also in Wellington. In addition, the partners in environmental issues with Tokelau will be sent a copy. They include SPREP, SPC and the Pacific Invasives Initiative, part of the Invasive Species Specialist Group. Building networks with quarantine and biosecurity agencies in the Pacific region is essential for acknowledging Tokelau's participation in international biosecurity programmes..