

TO OUR VALUED CUSTOMERS:

As part of the County's ongoing commitment to provide you with the highest possible quality mulch product, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) recently surveyed our site for Little Fire Ants (LFA). During this survey they found positive test results around the perimeter of our Hilo facility. **PLEASE NOTE: LFAs WERE NOT FOUND IN THE UNPROCESSED GREENWASTE PILE OR THE PROCESSED MULCH PILE.** Big Island EKO Systems, the County of Hawai'i, and the HDOA are working together to respond quickly to the situation and establish a management plan. We started periodic bait treatment of the affected areas to prevent the spread of LFAs within our facility; however, no pesticides or other chemicals have been used on the unprocessed greenwaste, processed mulch, or our equipment, in response to this pest. We will continue to monitor our product to ensure it stays free of LFA.

While every effort is being made to ensure our mulch does not contain Little Fire Ants there is always a slight risk that it might do so. If you are concerned about accidentally transporting Little Fire Ants to your property, there are a number of things you can do once you get home. Our staff will provide you with a Stop the Little Fire Ant brochure which will tell you more about this species, how to survey your mulch once you have brought it home and how to treat any ants you might find.

TREATING THE MULCH: It is always a good idea to further compost the product before using it on your garden. This composting process not only produces a better mulch, but done properly will also kill ants, most seeds and other pests that the mulch might contain. Place the mulch on a tarp and then cover with a clear plastic sheeting. Regular turning of the mulch pile helps maintain a warm temperature ($\geq 150^{\circ}$) throughout the material while discouraging any ants from nesting there (ants do not like being disturbed). Additionally, these procedures help create a higher quality final product - tarping keeps the mulch moist and turning helps it break down faster. Other pest treatment suggestions, such as baits and pesticides, can be found in the brochure.

PREVENT THE SPREAD OF PESTS: When dropping off greenwaste at our facility, please be sure it is free of LFAs, or any other pests (animal or plant). If you think you have LFAs, please follow the HDOA guide for testing and bring them a frozen sample (DO NOT transport live specimens). If you notice LFAs in the mulch, report to site personnel immediately. ***Do not touch them!***

WE APPRECIATE YOUR KOKUA IN THIS MATTER. SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS REGARDING LFA, PLEASE CONTACT:

Hawai'i Department of Agriculture
Plant Pest Control Branch, Bio Control Section
974-4140

HILO GREEN WASTE FACILITY SHOWING POSITIVE LITTLE FIRE ANT (LFA) DETECTIONS



Note: Little flags on aerial photo mark sites with positive detection of LFA