



CODE OF CONDUCT

Collecting live ants for research and education

We at School of Ants believe that researchers, including citizen scientists taking part in this project, typically act in a reasonable manner, respecting the environment and the animals and plants within it. However, in an effort to make the ethics of collecting invertebrates, especially ants, more transparent for non-scientists, we have developed a Code of Conduct that all participants in School of Ants are expected to abide by.

No animal ethics approvals are required to conduct research on invertebrates such as ants. If you are interested in understanding more about animal ethics requirements in research, please follow the links that appear at the end of this Code of Conduct. The links will lead you to Australian guidelines for the use of animals in research.

This Code of Conduct is designed to guide School of Ants participants, but also to help understand some basic but important biology of ants that are relevant to whether or not you are OK with killing them for research and learning about our planet.

Some things to remember about ants: -

- Ants act as a colony rather than as individuals.
- The majority of worker ants you will ever see are females, but they DO NOT become mothers like females of non-social insects and other organisms.
- When collecting and killing even up to 100 worker ants from a colony there is very little chance of influencing the life span of that colony, which will persist as it would have if you had not removed some of the workers.
- The non-reproductive female worker ants live for a relatively short time compared to the egg-laying queen.
- Male ants are produced in order to mate with a queen. They then die. Some don't even live for a week.
- It is highly unlikely that you will collect any queens or males at all during School of Ants collections.

THE CODE:

1. General data collection

- No more ant specimens than are found on the food cards should be captured or killed.
- No individual organism of any other type should be killed with the ants. Always try and remove any other organism from the ziplock bag before freezing specimens.
- Do as little damage to the habitat as possible. Do not remove any litter layer, grass or organic material from the collection area.
- Collections should always be kept in a labelled ziplock bag, and sent as soon as possible after collection to the School of Ants.
- It is illegal to take an action that will have a significant impact on a listed species or ecological community (EPBC Act 1999, Subdivision C, Subsection 18 and 18A).

2. Recording data

- a. All data will be recorded to the best of the collector's ability, including completing all fields in the data sheet.
- b. The collector must record their name on the data sheet.
- c. All accidents and errors will be recorded and communicated to the School of Ants to uphold the integrity of the data.

3. Permissions

- a. Collectors must obtain specific permission from private landholders if wishing to carry out School of Ants collections on land that is not their own.
- b. If an ant species is an Aboriginal totem, the person whose totem it is must not collect those ants.

4. Health & Safety Issues

- a. Some ants have painful bites and/or stings. If collecting in an area with known Red Imported Fire Ant infestations, wear gloves, do not poke or touch ant nests and mounds with your fingers, and beware of ants crawling into your socks or clothing.
- b. Bullants (*Myrmecia spp.*) have a painful bite and sting. Be aware of the ants in your collecting area and avoid bullants.

Links to animal ethics guidelines and international regulations

Australian Animal Ethics Infolink: <http://www.animaethics.org.au/>

National Health and Medical Research Council Publications relating to animal ethics:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/subject/Animal%20ethics>