

Australian Plague Locust

(*Chortoicetes terminifera*)

Native to Australia, the Australian plague locust is a grey, brown or sometimes green insect that can attack and cause significant damage to crops and pastures when populations build to high levels.

Overview

The Australian plague locust is a significant agricultural pest. In years with high summer rainfall, populations can build up over several generations and create swarms that infest large areas.

Adult locust populations can emerge in South Australian cropping and pastoral regions in spring and are readily observed as swarms of adult locusts.

Migrating adult locusts are highly mobile and can move quickly between paddocks and districts, readily reinvading treated areas and feeding on established crops and pastures, particularly where local densities are high.

Identification

- Adults grow 25–44 mm long.
- General body colour is grey, brown or occasionally green – often with a pale stripe down the middle of the back.
- The hind wing has a conspicuous black smudge at the tip.
- Hind legs have red shanks.
- Adults make short flights just above the grass, often landing side-on to the observer.



Impact

A high-density swarm covering 2km² can eat 20 tonnes of vegetation per day. Locusts at both the hopper and adult stage can cause extensive damage to crops, orchards, vineyards, vegetable produce and pastures.

Locusts may travel several hundred kilometres in night migrations in search of food, with shorter distances (rarely more than 20km) travelled during the day.

Life cycle

Locusts have a three-stage life cycle:

Egg

Female locusts bury egg pods in the soil in holes up to 100mm deep. Eggs need moisture and warmth to incubate in the soil. Under ideal conditions, eggs hatch in 2-3 weeks but can survive extended dry periods and may remain viable in the soil up to 12 months.

Hopper (Nymph)

The egg hatches into a hopper. Hoppers look like small wingless adults. Hoppers gather into large groups (bands) and crawl around to eat green vegetation. Hoppers can form dense bands of up to 5,000 locust per m² and be damaging to crops.

Adult

The hopper finally grows wings and flies away as an adult. Adult locusts need to eat fresh green plants to build up energy to reproduce and lay eggs.

In normal spring/summer temperatures, minimum life cycle is:

- egg: 11 days
- nymph: 35 days
- laying adult: 12 days



To report locust activity,
register for email updates
or to learn more, visit:
pir.sa.gov.au/locusts

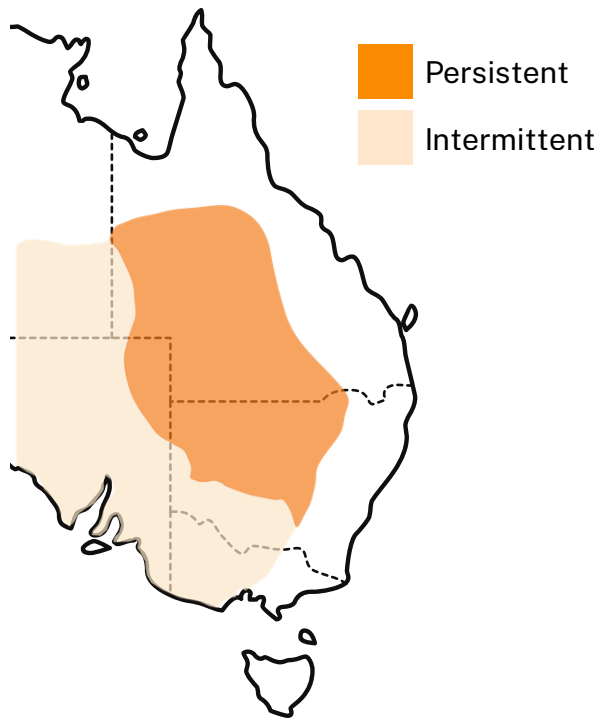


Government
of South Australia
Department of Primary
Industries and Regions

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Normal distribution of Australian plague locust



Reporting

Landholders and producers are encouraged to report any sightings of locust activity.

Call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

1800 084 881

or visit pir.sa.gov.au/locusts

Control

- Landholders are responsible for locust control on their properties. PIRSA assists with control where there are large outbreaks (above 100 hectares) in pastoral areas to reduce overall impact and populations.
- Locusts are readily controlled with insecticides if treated while in nymph stage, around 2 to 3 weeks old when they aggregate and form into bands.
- Only insecticides registered or approved for use to control the Australian plague locusts by the **Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)** can be used in South Australia's cropping, horticulture or livestock producing areas.
- Adults and nymphs can be controlled with standard APVMA registered or permitted insecticides – details available on www.apvma.gov.au
- Landholders and primary producers are advised to watch out for signs of the pest and to factor in locusts as part of their current pest control planning, following normal crop protection and insect control principles.

Describing population density

Using standard descriptions for locust densities allows landholders to accurately describe the extent of their locust infestation. This information is important when coordinating control operations. The terms below are those used by the Australian Plague Locust Commission.

Adults		Nymphs	
Concentration	0.5–3	Present	1–5
Low density swarm	4–10	Numerous	6–30
Medium density swarm	11–50	Sub-band	31–80
High density swarm	>50	Band	>80

Values above indicate the number of insects per square metre (m²).

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