

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



New study aims to take sting out of ant allergy

The jack jumper ant is well known for its large size and painful, sometimes deadly, sting.

Myrmecia pilosula is appropriately nicknamed the jack jumper as they cover ground with a series of fast jumps. A particularly aggressive ant, jack jumpers will attack when their nests are threatened.

Masters student John Evans, from the UTAS School of Geography and Environmental Studies, is conducting a survey to find out where jack jumpers prefer to live in Hobart, as well as where the ants are not found.

By finding out where jack jumpers make their nests, jack jumper hot-spots can be more easily avoided by those with potentially life-threatening ant allergies.

“Although the jack jumper ant is well known to Tasmanians, there are few published studies of its biology or ecology- I’m attempting to address this lack of research,” John said.

“Stings from the jack jumper ant pose a significant risk to people who are allergic to ant venom- jack jumpers cause over 90 per cent of ant venom anaphylaxis in Australia.”

Between 1980 and 1999 there were six recorded ant sting related deaths in Australia- the jack jumper was responsible for all of them.

John said an understanding of the behaviour and habitat as well as the circumstances in which jack jumper stings are likely to occur, will provide information to help to reduce the likelihood of jack jumper stings.

“I hope to be able to offer recommendations for those wishing to avoid a confrontation with a jack jumper, as well as understand their distribution in Hobart.

“I also want responses from people who have never seen an ant in their garden,” he said.

To fill in John’s jack jumper survey and find out more information about ant allergy, go to www.antallergy.org.

For information and interviews, contact John Evans, mobile: 0407 224 032.

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