

MEDICAL IMPORTANCE OF FIRE ANT *PACHYCONDYLA SENNAARENSIS* (HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE) IN IRANSHAHR AND SARBAZ COUNTIES, SOUTHEASTERN OF IRAN

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Abstract Ants can bite, sting and squirt formic acid. Usually the effects of the stings are mild but ants, like wasps, are capable of multiple stinging and this can induce anaphylactic shock. A few ants (such as *Formica rufibarbis*) are secondary hosts of *Dicrocellium dentriticum* in north and northwest of Iran but new medical problem is biting and stinging of the newly reported fire ant *Pachycondyla sannaarensis* (Formicidae; Hymenoptera) in south and southeast of Iran. This questionnaire-based study was conducted to determine the incidence of their biting and their effects on routine life of people in Iranshahr and Sarbaz counties. The questionnaire was completed in a random cluster manner. The results revealed that biting of the ant is mild and none of bitten individuals had systematic reactions. At least 92.5% of questioned individuals was bitten at least once. They complained of its painful sting. Incidence of biting had no difference between men and women (50.9% and 49.1% respectively). The majority of people (69.2%) were bitten on the limbs (hands and legs). The sore of the bite was tolerable for majority of individuals (82.9%) while 38% of them suffered pain for a few hours. Effects of biting was surveyed and also photographed in a healthy volunteer. Seven years continuous draught has limited the ant colonies because their colonies are strongly dependent on humidity of soil. However, they annoy the residents by invading into homes and human premises.