

Indoor infestations of two imported ant species (*Pheidole anastasii* Mayr, 1870 and *Pheidole punctatissima* Emery, 1896) (Hymenoptera, Formicidae) in Norway

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During the period 2005–2007 **eight indoor infestations of *Pheidole*** (Formicidae) have been reported to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. One infestation was identified as *Pheidole anastasii* Emery, 1896 and two as *P. punctatissima* Mayr, 1870. As to species level, the remaining samples were not identified. All the reported infestations were from cities or near cities in southern Norway. Most likely, the ants were imported with the soil in flower pots.

Key words: *Pheidole anastasii*, *Pheidole punctatissima*, tramp species, ants, import

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INTRODUCTION

The ant genus *Pheidole* (Myrmicinae) is hyperdiverse with nearly 900 described species and an estimated total number of more than 1500 species worldwide (Wilson 2003). The natural range of *Pheidole* spans from Washington State in the USA to Argentina, as well as from southern Europe to South Africa, China, Tasmania and across the Pacific (Wilson 2003). McGlynn (1999) summarized data on worldwide transfer of ants and found that 15 species of *Pheidole* were reported outside their native range. One species, *Pheidole megacephala* (Fabricius, 1793), has become a cosmopolitan due to human transport (McGlynn 1999, Ward et al 2006, Boase 2007). Specimens of *Pheidole* were found in Norway on a few earlier occasions; however, they failed to be identified as to species level, nor have they been finally stored (Reidar Mehl, pers. com.).

RECORDS

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Department of Pest Control, received eight reports of indoor infestations by *Pheidole*-species (Figure 1) during the time period December 2005 to December 2007. All infestations occurred in cities or near cities in southern Norway (Table 1). Specimens from two sites were identified as *P. punctatissima* Mayr, 1870 and from one site as *P. anastaii* Emery, 1896. Ants from the five remaining samples were not identified as to species; however, their colour and appearance closely resembled *P. punctatissima*. No ants possessed the grossly swollen postpetiole characteristic of *P. megacephala* (Longino & Cover 2003a). Primarily, the colonies observed were relatively small. An exception was the *P. anastasii* colony observed in an office building. At this site, the ants had become established in the floor with hot water pipes. Mating flights of several hundred winged specimen occurred along with what appeared to be more than thousand