



Government of Trinidad and Tobago  
Ministry of Food Production

# GIANT AFRICAN SNAIL

**A NOTIFIABLE PEST IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO (Act 13 of 1975)**



Images: Chanderbhan Shripat, Research Division, Ministry of Food Production, Land & Marine Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago

## What is it?

The giant African snail is one of the world's most destructive land snails. It is an alien invasive species of quarantine importance.

## Where is it present?

The giant African snail is native to East Africa. It was introduced into Asia, the Pacific Region and Brazil. It was found numerous times in the USA and was eradicated. In the 1980's it was introduced into the Caribbean, and today it is present in Guadeloupe, Martinique, St Lucia, Barbados, Antigua and Dominica. In October 2008 it was found in Trinidad at Alyce Glen Gardens. Today it is present in the Diego Martin Valley, Maraval Valley, Invaders Bay, Mt. Lambert, Aranguez North and South and Barataria.

## How is it spread?

Live giant African snails spread across the world through deliberate introduction, illegal trade and contaminated material. Also, dormant snails may be mistaken as empty shells and moved by collectors. Within a country, the snail spreads by hitching a ride on vehicles, shipping containers, machinery, crates, and plant material. Snail eggs can be spread by moving infested soil, garbage and plant debris.

## What does it eat?

In its native range, the giant African snail is a scavenger found on decayed vegetation. As an invasive species it has been reported on **over 500 plant types** including:

- vegetable crops (cabbage, ochro, cucumbers, pumpkin, melons, spinach, lettuce, tomato, melongene, pepper, broccoli, cauliflower, peas, beans, bodi, seim, breadfruit);
- fruit trees (citrus, bananas, papaya, soursop);
- field crops (rice, dasheen, eddoes, cassava, yam, sweet potato, coffee, cocoa, sugarcane);
- forest trees (teak, mahogany, rubber); and
- ornamentals (bougainvillea, poinsettia, orchid, rose, Cosmos, *Ficus*, *Ipomea*).

## Why should I care?

The giant African snail is a serious pest of agriculture and tourism (damaging landscapes). It can cause significant economic losses. In Florida it was estimated that an annual loss of \$US11 million (in 1969) would have been incurred if its population had not been controlled.

The giant African Snail is a vector of the rat lungworm (*Angiostrongylus cantonensis*) that causes eosinophilic meningitis in humans. This parasite can be contracted by eating

improperly cooked snail meat or by handling live snails and transferring snail mucus to our eyes, nose, and mouth.

The giant African Snail can live up to 10 years and has the ability to become dormant in unfavourable conditions. Each snail carries both male and female sex organs. After mating both snails produce eggs. A snail can produce up to 500 eggs in one laying, and 1200 individuals in a year, thereby establishing a very large population in a relatively short time. **Once this snail is established, management is difficult and expensive.**

### What do I look for?

The giant African snail is large, weighing as much as 1 kg. It lays eggs in batches of 100-500. Eggs are round to oval, about 5 mm ( $\frac{1}{4}$ " in length and cream to yellow (Fig. 1).



Image: Yuri Yashin, achatina.ru, Bugwood.org

**Fig.1. A clutch of *A. fulica* eggs.**

The shell is conical and can measure up to 30 cm (12") but usually ranges from 5-13 cm (2-5"). It usually has more than seven whorls (Fig. 2).

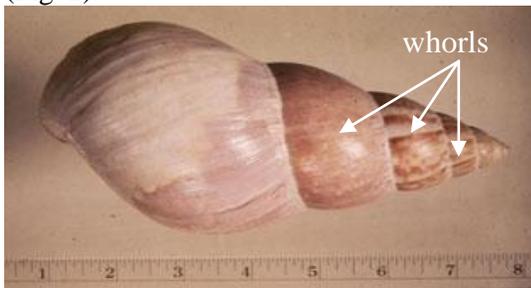


Image: Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

**Fig.2. Shell of *A. fulica*.**

The colour of the shell varies with diet and the environment. The shell is usually brown with reddish-brown and light yellow or cream streaks (Fig. 3).



Image: Roberta Zimmerman, USDA APHIS

**Fig. 3. *A. fulica* adults.**

### Where do I look?

The giant African snail is nocturnal, but may become active at dawn and dusk if it is very wet. They prefer damp, shady places and avoid direct sunlight. In the day they are commonly found:

- under ledges, bricks, rocks, logs, plant mats, decaying leaves, or discarded containers; and
- in or on plants, trees, heavy vegetation, brick holes, crevices.

### What can I do?

1. Report sightings
  - call **646-6284**.
  - email pictures to [snailreport@gmail.com](mailto:snailreport@gmail.com)
2. Do not put live snails in the garbage.
3. Do not move soils/debris from where snails are present to other areas.
4. Check your vehicles, machinery etc. for snails
  - use plastic gloves and remove them.
  - place in a secure container.
  - call the Ministry's hotline 646-6284.
5. **Help stop the spread of the giant African snail!**

