How to identify locusts

Locusts are flying insects that can form dense and highly mobile swarms, able to devastate agricultural crops, pastures and other vegetation.

In Queensland, there are three locust species of economic importance which are the spur throated locust, migratory locust and Australian plague locust. There are some 500 grasshopper species in Australia, some of which can develop large localised infestations without the risk of swarming. It is therefore important that land managers can identify locust species considered economically important pests in Queensland.

The identifying features are the same for both sexes of locusts. The patterning on the head, body and forewings vary considerably in each species and are poor identification characteristics.

### Australian plague locust (*Chortoicetes terminifera*)

- **Black tip**
- **Scarlet shanks**
- **Adults are 25–44 mm in length**

**Description**
- Body colour varies with grey, brown or occasionally green.
- Hind wing is clear with conspicuous black smudge at the tip.
- Hind legs have red shanks.
- Easily confused with Eastern plague grasshopper which has a thick black band through the hing wing.
- Often lands side on to the observer.

### Spur-throated locust (*Austracris guttulosa*)

- **Large spines with dark tips**
- **Mauve shanks**
- **Adults are 50–80 mm in length**

**Description**
- Nymphs are green on hatching, developing a white to black stripe down their back.
- Nymphs and adults have a conspicuous spur between the front legs.
- Adults have slim pale brown bodies with a long straw coloured stripe.
- Hind wings are clear with a slight blue tinge and hind legs bear two rows of dark tipped white spines.
**Migratory locust (Locusta migratoria)**

- **Pronotum arched**
- **Non-swarming**
- **Clear or faint yellow**
- **Sometimes smoky**
- **Hairy chest**
- **Yellow shanks**
- **Adults are 14–60 mm in length**

**Description**

- Nymphs can be a dark or a striking black and tan colour.
- Adults vary from green to brown or straw coloured when swarming.
- Adults have fine hair on their chest.
- Adult flight is strong and steady, with the slight green wing tinge visible.

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**Locust density categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locusts</th>
<th>Number/m²</th>
<th>Number/250m²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolated</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scattered</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6–25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low numerous</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>26–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High numerous</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>51–125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentration</td>
<td>0.5–3</td>
<td>126–750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low density swarm</td>
<td>4–10</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium density swarm</td>
<td>11–50</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High density swarm</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.