

GUIDELINES FOR THE ACCIDENTAL UNEARTHING OF GIANT GIPPSLAND EARTHWORMS MARCH 2016

Even after appropriate survey, assessment and planning have been undertaken at a site, undetected populations of the Giant Gippsland Earthworm may be accidentally unearthed during project works. The following guidelines have been produced to manage these incidents.

IN THE EVENT OF THE ACCIDENTAL UNEARTHING OF GIANT GIPPSLAND EARTHWORMS THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY.

1. All works must cease within a 50m diameter AREA around the location of the incident.
2. The Site Supervisor must be alerted to the incident
3. The Site Supervisor must establish the AREA as an INCIDENT SITE by securing the boundary and preventing any movement of machinery into the site or any further disturbance to the soil.
4. The Site Supervisor must ensure that any earthworms left exposed in the soil are left in situ and covered with a 10cm layer of moist soil.
5. The Site Supervisor must ensure that any earthworms unearthed and appearing uninjured must be collected and relocated according to the instructions provided.
6. The Site Supervisor must ensure that any dead or fatally injured animals are collected and put in **95 % alcohol in sealed glass jar or plastic container or frozen storage** as soon as possible after unearthing for collection by DSE or deposit at Museum Victoria. All specimens must be accompanied by appropriate label with date, precise locality and organisation details.
7. The Site Supervisor must ensure that the Biodiversity Unit, DELWP Office, Traralgon (Ph: 03 51722111) is contacted within 24 HOURS regarding earthworms that required collection.
8. The Site Supervisor must ensure that an INCIDENT REPORT is completed in the format provided and sent to the Agency responsible for authorizing the works (e.g. DPI, shires, DELWP) within 24 HOURS OF THE INCIDENT.

RECOMMENCEMENT OF WORK

Works can only recommence within the stop work area once all relevant statutory approvals and permits have been obtained. This may include the requirement for further expert assessment of the area, upon the advice of both the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (*Wildlife Act 1975*) and the federal Department of the Environment (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

The Giant Gippsland Earthworm has been officially listed under both Victorian and Federal legislation as a threatened species. As a result, permits from both levels of government may be required to either remove animals or interfere with their habitat. Substantial penalties may apply for non-adherence.

INCIDENT REPORT FOR THE ACCIDENTAL UNEARTHING OF GIANT GIPPSLAND EARTHWORMS

Name of company/organisation:

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Name of contact:

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Contact details:

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Location of Incident:

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Date of Incident:

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Size of area from which earthworms unearthed.....

Estimate of numbers of worms unearthed.....

Number of earthworms recovered in situ.....

Number of earthworms taken for relocation.....

Description of Incident

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Attach **photograph** of habitat/incident

This Incident Report must be sent to the authorizing agency within 24 hours

INSTRUCTIONS FOR RELOCATING GIANT GIPPSLAND EARTHWORMS

It is important that the following instructions are followed in order to ensure the best possible chance of survival for Giant Gippsland Earthworms that have been accidentally unearthed and need to be placed back into the soil.

1. Collect all uninjured earthworms. Giant Gippsland Earthworms are fragile and must be handled with great care. They cannot support their own weight out of their burrows. They must ALWAYS be carried in a HORIZONTAL position. They should NEVER be held vertically and allowed to dangle. This always results in DEATH.
2. If more than one earthworm is unearthed, they can be kept in plastic box or esky with moist soil with either wet hessian or newspaper over the top for up to ONE HOUR while the relocation site is prepared. If the WEATHER is VERY WARM, earthworms must be relocated as SOON AS POSSIBLE.
3. Earthworms must be kept in a shaded location while being kept for relocation.
4. Relocate uninjured earthworms to a nearby site that will not be subject to any earthworks. This site should have a moist, predominantly clay soil.
5. Dig a small trench to a depth of approximately 30 cm. The length of the trench should be at least as long as the earthworm. The earthworm should be placed in the trench and gently covered with loose moist soil and the removed clods of pasture placed on top.
6. Up to two earthworms can be placed in a single trench.
7. If the soil is dry, wet the trench. Watering may also be required in the following days, particularly in summer. Expert advice is available from the Biodiversity Unit, DELWP Office, Traralgon (Ph: 03 51722111) any on-going need for watering of relocation sites.

Identification of Giant Gippsland Earthworms



Adult : 80-150 cm long x 2 cm diameter

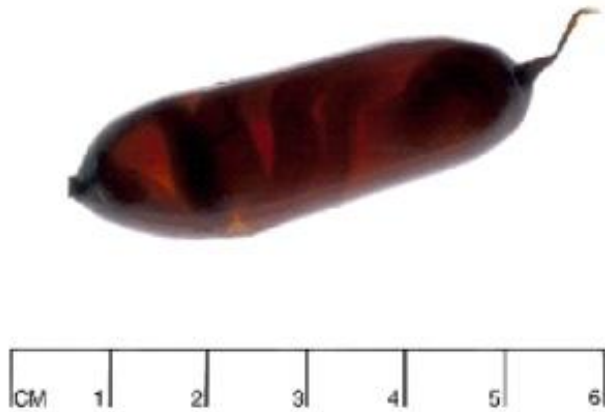
Colour: Dark purple head grading into pink-flesh colour

Distinguishing Marks: 3 bands positioned about 1/3 down the body on the ventral side (underneath) the adult worm



Identification of Giant Gippsland Earthworms *Cont-*

Egg Cocoons



Egg Cocoons:

Large (5-9 cm), amber coloured deposited within the burrow system and are found at an average depth of around 20 cm. They can be found all year round due to their long incubation period.

