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ENTOMOLOGY FACT SHEET
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What To Do About Ants

Several insecticides kill ants. But to do the job you have to get the ants and the chemicals together.

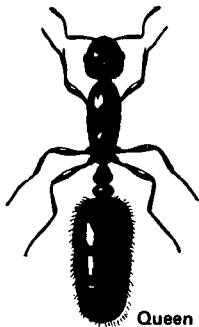


Worker

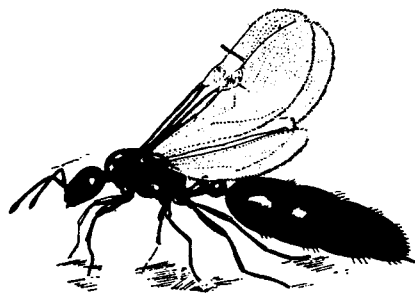
The quickest, surest way to control these pests is to treat their nests. These nests will be located in different places, depending on the kinds of ants involved. Carpenter ants usually tunnel out nesting galleries in wood. Some ants build nests in the soil, producing the character-

istic ant mound or hill, and others may nest in the house behind moldings, baseboards, countertops, and similar places.

When ants are in the home, the best way to locate the nest is to see where the ants go. With patience you usually can find the entrance to the nest area. The nest itself may be some distance away in a wall or another room.



Queen



Winged Queen

Periodically an ant colony produces winged reproductive forms that swarm out of the nest. After mating, the females seek out new nesting sites. They then lose their wings and become queens for new colonies. This swarming is often the first indication of an ant infestation in a home. It may help you locate the nest.

COMMON HOUSEHOLD ANT PESTS

Grease Ants

This ant, also called the Pharaoh ant, is a very tiny (1/16 inch) light to dark reddish-brown insect. It is an introduced species, possibly from the African Region, and has spread throughout the commercial areas of the world through commerce. This is the most common house-invading ant. It is also abundant in the yard, though usually not seen. Entire colonies normally enter houses or buildings where they nest in inaccessible places, usually in the kitchen. The most common nesting sites are around countertops, mop boards, and spaces between walls and cabinets where they can breed year-round. They will eat almost anything sweet or fatty but prefer grease, fats, and

meats or surfaces containing fatty substances. They also will feed on other insects, dead or alive. Mating flights have not been observed and new colonies are begun by splitting off from the original mother colony. It is common to find many wingless queens within a single colony.

Sweet Ants

Another common house-invading ant is the cornfield ant found living under sidewalks. Outdoors they feed on insects, gather nectar from plants, and tend honeydew-excreting insects, such as aphids. In homes sweets and meats are sought. Occasionally cornfield ants nest within the house, usually in faulty basement or low section woodwork or masonry. They do not persist long in houses since they often are infected with a parasitic fungus. There are, of course, several other species of house-invading, sweet-eating ants native to the United States. Commercially sold sweet-baits are effective in controlling sweet ants of all types.

Yellow Ants

These ants also are called perfumed yellow ants because of the lemony smell given off when disturbed. They are most noticeable in late fall and early winter when the winged forms appear. The workers are pale orange to yellow and the queens are darker, but twice as long. They are the same length as sweet ant workers and queens. Yellow ants generally nest in, near, or under foundation walls. Most of their activity is nocturnal and underground. In summer, they tend subterranean aphids and mealybugs on the roots of plants. Though workers may throw out earth or cement particles, they do no damage to masonry or woodwork. The ants usually are seen only near their nest.

TREATMENT

Diazinon, ronnel (Korlan), malathion, and propoxur (Baygon) are generally available insecticides for controlling ants. These materials are available in several different formulations. The type you use depends on the place to be treated.

In the House

If possible, apply a solution of ½ percent diazinon, 1.1 percent propoxur, or 3 percent premium grade malathion into the nest entrance. Also apply the solution to baseboards; to cracks, crevices, and other openings; and around sinks, bathtubs, and cupboards. One convenient way to do this is with a paintbrush. Be careful to avoid contaminating dishes and food.

The crack and crevice treatment produce results rather slowly because the ant must walk across the treated surfaces. However, the insecticides are long lasting. A treatment once every two or three months should be enough.

To prevent ants from entering the house from outside, apply the insecticide as a spray to the outside walls of the house. Especially spray the foundation, sills, porches, and cracks in foundations or walls.

If you locate the wood where carpenter ants are nesting, treat it thoroughly with ½ percent diazinon, 1 percent profoxur, or 3 percent premium grade malathion solution. Carpenter ants are unusually large black ants. They produce a coarse sawdust from the infested wood. They also may nest in dead trees, stumps, or logs near the house. See Entomology Fact Sheet No. 30 for further information on carpenter ants.

In the Yard or Garden

You may treat individual ant nests by drenching them with a diazinon preparation or sprinkle them with dust or granules. To prepare a drench, mix 1 tablespoon of 25 percent diazinon

emulsion concentrate per gallon of water. Pour the mixture onto the nest with a sprinkling can. Otherwise, simply pour it into the anthill openings.

If you apply the 2 to 15 percent dust or granules to the individual nests, soak it in thoroughly with a hose.

Caution

All insecticides must be handled with respect. Follow directions and precautions written on the container labels. Avoid spilling liquid insecticides on skin and clothing. Wash thoroughly with soap and water immediately after using insecticides. Do not breathe the dust or spray. Store all chemicals in original containers in a safe place where children and pets cannot reach them.

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